

# TEACH YOURSELF LAWN TENNIS

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## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. HOW TO START . . . . .	9
II. A SHORT HISTORY OF LAWN TENNIS . . . . .	23
III. THE RULES OF LAWN TENNIS . . . . .	28
IV. EQUIPMENT . . . . .	55
V. HOW TO HOLD THE RACKET . . . . .	62
VI. THE FOREHAND DRIVE . . . . .	73
VII. THE BACKHAND DRIVE . . . . .	77
VIII. VOLLEYING . . . . .	82
IX. THE LOB AND THE SMASH . . . . .	92
X. THE SERVICE . . . . .	105
XI. SINGLES TACTICS . . . . .	116
XII. DOUBLES TACTICS . . . . .	137
XIII. MATCH-PLAY . . . . .	158



# LIST OF PLATES

	OPPOSITE PAGE
London Grass Courts Championships. Queen's Club, London. Ladies' Doubles, final . . . . .	32
Lawn Tennis Championships, Wimbledon. Men's Doubles, fourth round . . . . .	32
Volleying at the net . . . . .	33
London Championships. Queen's Club, London. Men's Singles, semi-finals . . . . .	64
The International L.T.C. of Great Britain v. The International L.T.C. of France. Queen's Club, London . . . . .	64
Lawn Tennis Championships, Wimbledon. Ladies' quarter-finals match . . . . .	65
First Day of the Championships, Wimbledon. Men's Singles . . . . .	65
Service—Advanced Players . . . . .	96
The Smash . . . . .	97
Forehand Drive . . . . .	128
Backhand Drive . . . . .	129



## CHAPTER I

### HOW TO START

AT the very beginning of this book, let us assume that you, the reader, are willing and prepared to comply with its title and to make a real effort to teach yourself lawn tennis. Undoubtedly the first step towards learning to play any game is to go and watch it being played by experts. In that way, you will be able to see for yourself the final objective in your aim to become a proficient lawn tennis player, although you must be careful not to be disappointed at the high standard of the experts compared with your own first feeble efforts. The Lawn Tennis Championship Meeting held on the courts of the All-England Club at Wimbledon at the end of June and the beginning of July each year is recognised as numbering the finest players in the world among its entries, and it should be the aim of every tennis enthusiast, if at all possible, to spend a day at that meeting watching and learning. In order to help the keen beginner, then, let us pay an imaginary visit to that great sporting event.

We start by taking the Underground to Southfields Station, from which a short journey by bus—there is a well-organised relay of them every minute or two—brings us to the main gates of the

All-England Club. As it is almost impossible to obtain a ticket for a seat unless one applies a long time ahead, we will assume that we have taken this wise precaution and have been allotted a good position on the Centre Court. In order to avoid unnecessary rush and crowding, we arrive shortly after noon and enjoy a pleasant picnic lunch on the beautifully kept lawns adjoining the main refreshment buffet. At the beginning of the Wimbledon fortnight, matches are taking place on all of the fifteen courts, and later on we will walk round to watch some of these outside games ; but for the moment, our object is to enjoy the privilege of a seat overlooking the Centre Court, where, according to the luck of the draw, the best matches take place.

So after lunch we make our way to our seat, admiring, incidentally, the excellent organisation and marshalling system which enables us to reach it so easily through the labyrinth of passages surrounding the Centre Court and Court No. 1. Under the enormous stands we notice such amenities as a Post Office, a Left Luggage Office, a complete row of Telephone Boxes, and three Information Bureaux. Finally, we emerge from the comparative darkness of one of those passages into the bright sunlight which is shining down on to the most famous lawn tennis court in the world. To the expert and to the beginner alike, everything is as perfect as can be imagined. Except for the mathematically accurate white lines and a slightly worn brownish patch near

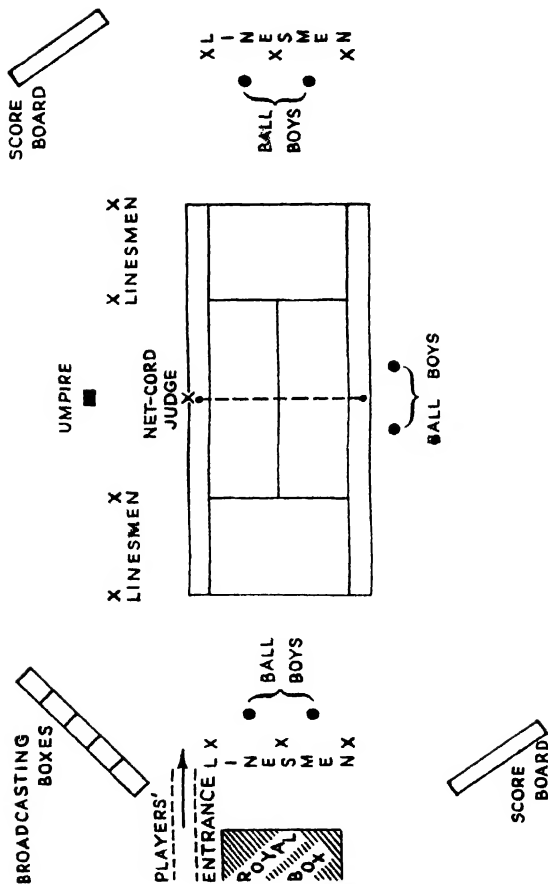


each base-line, the whole court is a weedless stretch of green grass, with ample room at the ends and sides. At the south end is the Royal Box, and at the south-east and north-west corners are the two electrically operated score-boards.

A few minutes before two o'clock, the time for the first match to start, the various officials begin to appear. In addition to the umpire on his special seat high up above the net, there are ten linesmen for a singles match, a net-cord judge, and six ball boys. The diagram on the next page will help you to visualise the scene.

The first match on the particular afternoon we have selected for our visit to Wimbledon is between Miss Shirley Fry of the U.S.A. and Mrs. Jean Walker-Smith of Great Britain. Punctually at two o'clock they come on to the Centre Court to face a battery of camera men before they have the customary knock-up. This preliminary practice can teach us quite a lot ; there is no question of merely hitting a ball to and fro indiscriminately. On the contrary, it is a systematic knock-up, designed to practise each kind of stroke in turn. First of all, the two players stand right off the court and from well behind the base-lines they make fifteen or twenty forehand drives at each other. Then they do the same on the backhand. Next, Miss Fry advances to the net and Mrs. Walker-Smith hits a dozen balls straight at her to give her some volleying practice ; then they change round for Mrs. Walker-

## LAWN TENNIS



Smith to do the volleying. Finally, each player serves half a dozen times into each court, while the ball boys scamper around the outskirts of that lovely arena recovering the balls and keeping the players well supplied. While all these preliminary activities are being carried out, both girls wear attractive cardigans, even though it is a hot afternoon. At last, after five or six minutes of strenuous exercise, the players signal to the umpire that they are ready to begin, cardigans are removed, a set of new balls is thrown out from the refrigerator behind the umpire's seat, and the match starts.

The first lesson which the keen learner will acquire from that preliminary knock-up is that all practice should have a purpose behind it. That does not mean that all games should be serious ones ; games are meant to be fun, and if they are too solemn, they will not give the enjoyment which they should. Yet there is no reason why you should not " practise while you play ". When you go on to a court with a friend, you might both agree to play on to each other's forehand as much as possible during the first set ; if you are both right-handed, this will improve your cross-court shots enormously. For the second set, you might concentrate on each other's backhand ; this will again develop your accuracy, in addition to strengthening what is usually a weak stroke.

The other lesson which can be learned from that introductory knock-up is that cold muscles need to

be warmed up gradually. The human body is just like a motor-car engine in that respect. It needs to be nursed carefully once it has just started, so never call for an all-out effort when your muscles are cold. What is wanted is a gradual warming-up process which brings as many muscles as possible into action ; and remember to keep as warm as you can with extra articles of clothing until the exercise itself keeps you warm.

Now let us consider the actual match. We can hear an appreciative round of clapping from the game on Court No. 1 as Miss Fry begins to serve for the first game on the Centre Court. With the help of two delightful drop shots, Mrs. Walker-Smith wins the first game. We notice that, although she plays the vast majority of her shots from behind the base-line, every now and then she deliberately cuts her backhand, so that the ball travels just over the net and then falls dead. At first, Miss Fry does not bother to run up for these, but later in the set, as she warms to the task, she not only chases these drop shots but also produces some grand winners from them.

The first three games all go against the service, mainly due to excellent returns of the first services ; and that brings out an important point well worth considering. All lawn tennis players realise that the return of service is a vital part of the game, but after we had done a little elementary mathematics that afternoon at Wimbledon, we realised its importance

still more. Miss Fry, it ought to be explained, eventually defeated Mrs. Walker-Smith in two sets by 8-6, 6-4, that is to say, in 24 games. Now assuming that each game consisted on an average of at least six services, that totals a minimum of 144 services. Of those, we could only count five winners, so at that rate 139 were returned, a very high percentage indeed.

It is interesting to watch the tactics employed by these two girls as they placidly reel off game after game in front of that vast audience. Both of them play most of their shots from well behind the baseline, although when they do advance to the net their volleys are generally winning ones. The American's service, especially her first one, is much harder and firmer, but Mrs. Walker-Smith varies hers much better; in fact, a bad return by Miss Fry off one of these slower services gives the British girl the lead at 3-1. Miss Fry then easily holds her service to love, and then, with a grand low cross-court shot, she levels the score at 3-all. Racing up to the net to make two perfect backhand volleys, Miss Fry again holds her service to lead for the first time at 4-3, but Mrs. Walker-Smith looks to heaven and smiles as a lucky net-cord shot enables her to draw level again. Five all and six all are called, but at 7-6 the American breaks through to win the first set at 8-6 after 33 minutes' play. Exactly half an hour later, Miss Fry wins the match by taking the second set at 6-4, and both girls leave the court to

the accompaniment of an appreciative round of applause.

No sooner has this first match ended than the Centre Court again becomes the scene of much official activity. A fresh umpire and a host of new linesmen appear, the net and posts which had been used for the Singles game are now removed and a Doubles set inserted in their place, the net-cord judge checks the exact height carefully, and four well-known men players come out to take part in a fourth-round match of the Gentlemen's Doubles Championship. They are K. McGregor and F. A. Sedgman of Australia and their opponents B. Destremau of France and his partner T. Johansson of Sweden. Although we do not realise it at the time, McGregor and Sedgman are destined to be the ultimate winners of this Doubles Championship, and we decide to remain in our seats for a while and watch the first set at least. Destremau and Johansson, who have already knocked out two pairs of Englishmen in the previous rounds, take some time to settle down, and with the tall, bronzed McGregor serving magnificently, the Australian pair coast comfortably along to a 6-1 first-set victory.

At this stage we decide to leave our Centre Court seat and walk round to see some of the other matches. On Court No. 2, with its stands on each side packed with spectators, J. Drobny and E. W. Sturgess are being given a hard fight in the third set by two tall

young Australians, J. W. Cawthorn and D. P. Tregonning. We manage to squeeze in and find a square foot of standing room, and we are thrilled by a series of extremely rapid volleying rallies with all four players close up at the net. The ball travels like lightning from racket to racket, but we note that the final winner generally comes from Sturgess, who is extraordinarily quick to spot the tiniest opening.

After a quick cup of tea at one of the several refreshment buffets, we hurry round to Court No. 1 to queue up for what is to prove a great game between Mrs. Margaret du Pont, seeded No. 1, and Miss Beverley Baker, two of America's leading ladies. Miss Baker wins the first set at 6-1 entirely through her speed of stroke ; a stream of tremendously fast low drives comes whizzing over the net, most of them pitching within a foot of the base-line and giving Mrs. du Pont little chance of returning them. Miss Baker stands to receive service with her racket pointing directly towards the server, well up on her toes, with her body leaning slightly forward—a really alert position from which she makes many grand returns. She also has the big advantage of being ambidextrous, that is to say, she can use both right and left hands equally well, so, you see, she has no back-hand like an ordinary one-handed player. We watch her extremely carefully, but the speed at which she changes her racket from one hand to the other is like lightning ; and although this changing

might be a disadvantage in doubles, it certainly is most disconcerting in a singles game.

During the last few years at Wimbledon, quite a number of unorthodox players have become famous. We have had examples of two-handed grips on the backhand, some have been two-handed on both back- and forehand, and some have been ambidextrous. While it is essential, therefore, to advise young players and beginners to try to adopt the normally accepted grip or methods of stroke play, it is only fair that they should realise that if they find some other way more natural and easy, they should give that a trial, too. Do not be put off by people who tell you dogmatically that you *must* hold your racket in a certain way. Miss Doris Hart, for example, holds her racket well down the handle, but she still manages to produce flowing shots which most men could not produce if they gripped their rackets in the same way.

After we have watched the rather surprising defeat of Mrs. du Pont by Miss Baker, we spend the remainder of our time at Wimbledon hurrying round from one court to another in search of world-famous players in order to get glimpses of as many of them as possible in action. One thing which impresses us about the men is the fact that nearly all of them—Patty, Sedgman, Richardson, Sturges, Drobny and the rest—make a practice of serving their first service as fast as they possibly can; then, if it is a fault, their second serve is hit with an enormous



amount of spin, so as to make the ball bound and turn. Just occasionally, as a surprise, the second service is hit even harder than the first ; of course, that results in some double faults, but more often than not the sudden change catches the receiver unprepared.

Yet the outstanding feature about the men at Wimbledon is undoubtedly their overhead play. Nearly every time a ball is returned two feet or more above the net, it is volleyed back like a bullet. Budge Patty is really magnificent in dealing with anything within his reach overhead. He sometimes allows very high lobbs to bounce and then, as the ball comes down a second time, he treats it like a service and smashes it over the net for an almost certain winner. In this connection, it might be pointed out that volleying and overhead work is a part of the game at which beginners can all improve rapidly if only they are prepared to put in plenty of time at practice. Go out on to a court with a friend, and get him or her to send up a number of high balls while you stand somewhere near the service-line and practise hitting them down into your opponent's court. If the ground is hard so that the ball will bounce up to a good height, you can do as Patty does and allow some particularly high lobbs to pitch before you kill them ; but be sure that you get well under the ball.

One of the most interesting features which we notice at Wimbledon is the electrically operated

score-board. On the Centre Court there is one of these at each end, and also another one outside the arena itself, so that those of the crowd who are unable to find a place inside can watch the progress of any particular match as each point is scored and recorded. These boards show the names of the players, the results of any previous sets, the number of sets played, the number of games won in the set in progress, and the actual points in the particular game taking place. A row of little red lights appears opposite the name of the server, so that everybody—including the players, of course—can tell at a glance what is the exact position at any one moment. Here, for instance, is the position as we saw it at one stage during the first match we watched on the Centre Court :—

PREVIOUS SETS			SETS	GAMES	POINTS
6	MRS WALKER-SMITH			1	15
		SERVER			
8	MISS S FRY	••••	1	2	30
1 2 3 4					

This clearly indicates that Miss Fry is leading on her service by 30-15, that she has already won the first set by 8-6, and that she leads by 2 games to 1 in the second set. Obviously we cannot have such wonderful score-boards to tell us the exact position when we ordinary mortals play lawn tennis, yet it

is most important, even in the friendliest of games, for the score to be known. It is very irritating if you are the receiver and you are not quite sure whether the score is 40-30 or 30-40, and in any case it makes quite a difference to your next stroke. So if you are serving, do not be too timid, but see that you call out the score before each service, so that your opponents—and everyone else—know exactly how the match stands. Before each game begins, the server should call out the score in games, putting his own score first. So if you call 3-5, it means you are losing; but if you call 4-2, you are leading. If all players did this, there would be no more of those arguments when after, say, eight games, nobody is absolutely certain whether the score is 5-3, 3-5, or 4 all!

We cannot leave Wimbledon without mentioning Miss Doris Hart. On the last day of the fortnight she was destined to win three championships—the Ladies' Singles, the Ladies' Doubles (with Miss Fry) and the Mixed Doubles (with Frank Sedgman)—and we are lucky enough to be able to watch her defeating her American compatriot, Miss Chaffee, by 6-3, 6-3. As a child, Miss Hart was a cripple, and even now her legs are so frail that she really cannot be classed as a fast runner about the court. But the main feature of her tennis is that she has no obvious weaknesses. She serves as hard as most men, she volleys beautifully, she has the ability to produce fast flowing shots on both wings, and she

is a great tactician. No wonder that she is a world champion ! She literally has no weak spot, thanks entirely to her own hard work and to the encouragement of her family in America. Surely that is a lesson we can all learn. Which is our weak spot at tennis ? Service, backhand, volleying, lobbing ? It does not matter which it is, it can be improved by practice and concentration. Get an expert to show you the correct method and then go and practise ; it is the only way to overcome a weakness, and perhaps, like Doris Hart, you will be surprised at the result.

Soon after six o'clock, the crowds begin to disperse and make their ways home or to the various London termini. Play on Courts 6 to 15 has already finished, and the few remaining Mixed Doubles matches are something in the nature of an anti-climax after the tremendous struggles we have already seen. On our way out, we catch a glimpse of Great Britain's leading player, A. J. Mottram, and his wife winning their way into the Fifth Round, and then we take our places in the bus queue for Southfields Station. It has been a grand day, and we have taken the first step towards becoming reasonably proficient lawn tennis players-- we have seen the game being demonstrated by some of the greatest experts in the world. Our job now is to go and try to emulate them !

## CHAPTER II

### A SHORT HISTORY OF LAWN TENNIS

THE game of Lawn Tennis owes much to "Real" or "Royal" Tennis, a game which was probably first played in France during the thirteenth century. Later, Charles V had a court built at the Louvre, while the oldest tennis court in this country is the one at Hampton Court, which was built by Henry VIII. There is no doubt that the modern game of "Lawn" Tennis developed from this old game; the balls and the rackets and the general idea of hitting the ball over the net in such a manner as to defeat an opponent on the other side undoubtedly laid down the principles which are followed in our game to-day.

Lawn Tennis is a very "young" game in so far as it was unknown before 1875. In 1874, a Major Wingfield invented a game which he called "Sphairistike", a clever and original idea. The court was a grass one—not indoors—and it was shaped like an hour-glass, being wider at the two base-lines than at the net. Sphairistike was certainly the immediate forerunner of lawn tennis, and it was quickly recognised that with a few alterations and improvements it had the possibilities of a very good game. The result was that, under the new

name of Lawn Tennis, a code of rules was drawn up in 1875 by a committee of the Marylebone Cricket Club which was specially appointed in response to a number of requests.

It should be realised that up to that time croquet had been the only game in which ladies took part, and most country houses and vicarages possessed a croquet lawn, which did not take long to be transformed into one of the new rectangular tennis courts. The "All-England Croquet Club" became the "All-England Croquet and Lawn Tennis Club"; and so great was the popularity of the new game that eventually the "Croquet" and "Lawn Tennis" were reversed in the title. The first Championship attracted 22 competitors, a number which, we are told, "necessitated byes in the 2nd and 4th Rounds"! Mr. Spencer Gore was the first champion, and, in addition to a twisty underhand service, he used a kind of "deflected volley" at the net. Two years later, in 1880, there were over 1,300 spectators at the men's singles final. Long and often bitter wrangling developed on the question of volleying, at first as to whether it was fair or not, and then whether it was an advantage or not. The brothers Renshaw were the first to use the volley effectively, and in 1882 the height of the net at the posts was lowered from 4 feet to 3 feet 6 inches. This lowering proved to be of considerable assistance to the base-line players, because their passing shots became easier to make and because the ball was

not so high in the air for volleying. The result was a reasonable equilibrium, a balance between net-play and volleying on the one hand and base-line driving on the other. As volleying subsequently improved, however, the height of the net at the centre was lowered, first to 3 feet 3 inches, and finally to the present height of 3 feet. In 1884 a Ladies' Championship was introduced, and in 1888 another big step forward was taken with the formation of the Lawn Tennis Association.

So lawn tennis began to be a universal game, a game with an enormous number of keen regular players. It possesses the great advantage that it can be played over a large span of years ; a youngster named Coen once played in the U.S. Davis Cup team at the age of 16, while Borotra was still winning first-class tournaments at the age of 50. In proportion to the number of spectators who merely watch the game, lawn tennis probably possesses more actual players than any other major game, and with the help of officially appointed coaches, the standard of play of the thousands of club players is undoubtedly improving year after year. Mention will later be made of the "Davis Cup". This artistic bowl was presented for International Competition by Dwight F. Davis when he was Doubles Champion of the U.S.A. in 1900. Finalists in this "World Championship" have been the U.S.A., Great Britain, France, Belgium, Japan and Australia, while other countries which have taken part include Austria,

Canada, New Zealand, Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Denmark, Argentine, India, Italy, Sweden, Greece, Switzerland, Hungary, Norway, Spain and many others of a humbler standard.

It is impossible to mention all the famous players who have contributed to the development of this great game, but no history—however short—would be complete without a reference to some of them. Outstanding after the turn of the century were A. W. Gore, N. E. Brookes, A. F. Wilding, H. Roper Barrett—a specialist in doubles play—F. L. Riseley, the two brothers Doherty, and Mrs. Lambert Chambers, a wonderfully accurate baseline player. After the First World War, the scene was largely dominated by a series of great French players. Mlle Suzanne Lenglen, with her speed of foot and uncanny accuracy, as distinct from hard hitting, revolutionised the game from the women's point of view and showed what could be done by concentrated coaching; her father had brought her up from childhood to be a tennis champion and she very rarely lost even a game. Then came the "Four Musketeers"—Cochet, Borotra (probably the greatest of all Centre Court favourites), Brugnon and Lacoste—who between them won the Singles Championship for six years in succession.

After this period of French supremacy, the U.S.A. had a good innings until our own Fred Perry won the Championship for three years in succession in 1934, 1935 and 1936. Other great players between



the two World Wars were W. T. Tilden, Ellsworth Vines, Donald Budge, Bobbie Riggs and Jack Crawford amongst the men; and Mrs. Helen Wills-Moody (who holds the record of eight wins at Wimbledon), Miss Ryan (famous for her drop shots and for the fact that she has inscribed her name on the Ladies Doubles or Mixed Doubles Championships 19 times), Miss Dorothy Round, Miss Betty Nuthall, Senorita de Alvarez, Miss Helen Jacobs, and Miss Alice Marble amongst the ladies. Much of the credit for the improvement in women's lawn tennis can be given to the Wightman Cup contests between Great Britain and the U.S.A. The Americans keep on winning with monotonous regularity, but the matches—5 singles and 2 doubles—provide an opportunity for our ladies to re-adjust their standards by playing against the finest possible opposition.

Since the Second World War there has been a gradual increase in "unorthodoxy". Some of the world's best players are using two-handed grips, either for forehand or backhand or both, while many others are ambidextrous and consequently have no "backhand" at all. Whether this craze for the unorthodox will spread or not is uncertain, but there is no doubt that a certain amount of it adds spice to a game which is now firmly established throughout the whole world.

## CHAPTER III

### THE RULES OF LAWN TENNIS

THERE is no doubt whatever that it is possible to teach yourself lawn tennis. Many famous players in the past have been self-taught and many modern ones have never had a proper " lesson " in their lives. Yet if you, the reader, do seriously wish to follow the title of this book, one of the first essentials is to study the rules of the game. It is all very well going out on to a court and learning the rules at the expense of your partner and opponents, but that is rather a selfish method, and an hour devoted to studying the rules after you have watched a good game is a much better way, and it will, in addition, give you extra confidence. The rules of lawn tennis, like most regulations, are worded in lawyer-like terms and, candidly, they do not make very interesting reading, but an early knowledge of them will ensure a sound start for any beginner. So here they are, as they have been drawn up by the Lawn Tennis Association ; afterwards, those rules which seem to require further interpretation will be explained in unofficial terms.

#### THE SINGLES GAME

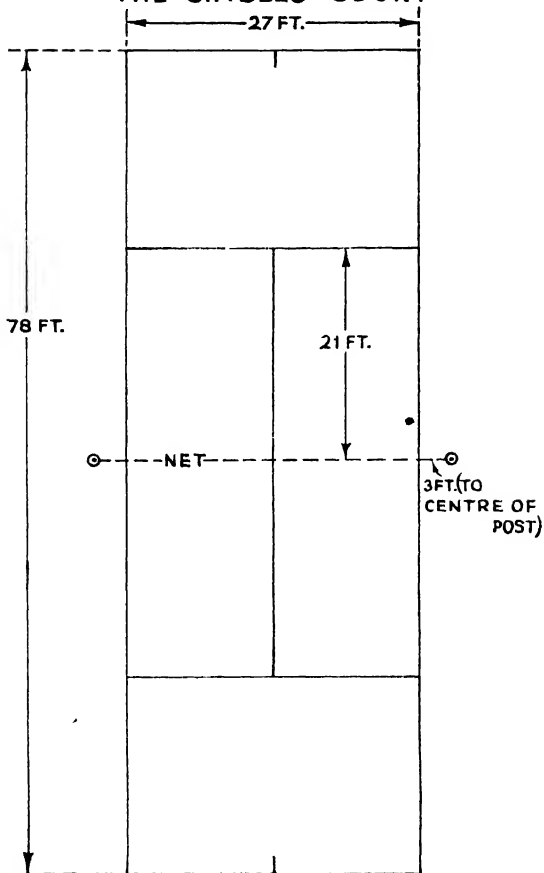
1. The Court shall be a rectangle, 78 feet long and 27 feet wide. It shall be divided across the

middle by a net, suspended from a cord or metal cable of a maximum diameter of  $\frac{1}{8}$ rd of an inch, the ends of which shall be attached to, or pass over, the tops of two posts, 3 feet 6 inches high, which shall stand 3 feet outside the Court on each side. The height of the net shall be 3 feet at the centre, where it shall be held down taut by a strap not more than 2 inches wide. There shall be a band covering the cord or metal cable and the top of the net for not less than 2 inches nor more than  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches in depth on each side. The lines bounding the ends and sides of the Court shall respectively be called the Base-lines and the Side-lines. On each side of the net, at a distance of 21 feet from it and parallel with it, shall be drawn the Service-lines. The space on each side of the net between the service-line and the side-lines shall be divided into two equal parts called the service-courts by the centre service-line, which must be two inches in width, drawn half-way between, and parallel with, the side-lines. Each base-line shall be bisected by an imaginary continuation of the centre service-line to a line 4 inches in length and 2 inches in width called the centre mark drawn inside the Court, at right angles to and in contact with such base-lines. All other lines shall be not less than 1 inch nor more than 2 inches in width, except the base-line, which may be 4 inches in width, and all measurements shall be made to the outside of the lines.

NOTE. In the case of the International Lawn

## LAWN TENNIS

## • THE SINGLES COURT •



Tennis Championship (Davis Cup) or other Official Championships of the International Federation, there shall be a space behind each base-line of not less than 21 feet, and at the sides of not less than 12 feet.

2. The permanent fixtures of the Court shall include not only the net, posts, cord or metal cable, strap and band, but also, where there are any such, the back and side stops, the stands, fixed or movable seats and chairs round the Court, and their occupants, all other fixtures around and above the Court, and the Umpire, Foot-fault Judge and Linesmen when in their respective places.

NOTE. For the purpose of this Rule, the word "Umpire" comprehends the Umpire and all those persons designated to assist him in the conduct of a match.

3. The ball shall have a uniform outer surface. If there are any seams they shall be stitchless. The ball shall be more than  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches and less than  $2\frac{5}{8}$  inches in diameter, and more than 2 ounces, and less than  $2\frac{1}{16}$  ounces in weight. The ball shall have a bound of more than 53 inches and less than 58 inches when dropped 100 inches upon a concrete base, and a deformation of more than 0.265 of an inch and less than 0.290 of an inch when subjected to a pressure of 18 lb. applied to each end of any diameter. All tests for bound, size and deformation shall be made in accordance with the Regulations in the Appendix hereto.

shall pass over the net and hit the ground within the Service-Court which is diagonally opposite, or upon any line bounding such Court, before the Receiver returns it.

9. The Service is a fault : (a) If the Server commit any breach of Rules, 6, 7 or 8 ; (b) If he miss the ball in attempting to strike it ; (c) If the ball served touch a permanent fixture (other than the net, strap or band) before it hits the ground.

10. After a fault (if it be the first fault) the Server shall serve again from behind the same half of the Court from which he served that fault, unless it was a fault because he served from behind the wrong half, when he shall be entitled to deliver one service from behind the other half. A fault may not be claimed after the next service has been delivered.

11. The Server shall not serve until the Receiver is ready. If the latter attempt to return the service, he shall be deemed ready. If, however, the Receiver signify that he is not ready, he may not claim a fault because the ball does not hit the ground within the limits fixed for the service.

12. In all cases where a let has to be called under the rules, or to provide for an interruption to play, it shall have the following interpretations :

- (a) When called solely in respect of a service that one service only shall be replayed.
- (b) When called under any other circumstance, the point shall be replayed.

13. The service is a let :—

- (a) If the ball served touch the net, strap or band, and is otherwise good, or, after touching the net, strap, or band, touch the Receiver or anything which he wears or carries before hitting the ground.
- (b) If a service or a fault be delivered when the Receiver is not ready (see Rule 11). In case of a let, that particular service shall not count, and the Server shall serve again, but a service let does not annul a previous fault.

14. At the end of the first game the Receiver shall become Server, and the Server Receiver ; and so on alternately in all the subsequent games of a match. If a player serve out of turn, the player who ought to have served shall serve as soon as the mistake is discovered, but all points scored before such discovery shall be reckoned. If a game shall have been completed before such discovery, the order of service remains as altered. A fault served before such discovery shall not be reckoned.

15. A ball is in play from the moment at which it is delivered in service. Unless a fault or a let be called it remains in play until the point is decided.

16. The Server wins the point :—

- (a) If the ball served, not being a let under Rule 13, touch the Receiver or anything which he wears or carries, before it hits the ground ;

- (b) If the Receiver otherwise loses the point as provided by Rule 18.

17. The Receiver wins the point (a) If the Server serve two consecutive faults ; (b) If the Server otherwise lose the point as provided by Rule 18.

18. A player loses the point if:—

- (a) He fail, before the ball in play has hit the ground twice consecutively, to return it directly over the net [except as provided in Rule 22 (a) or (c)] ; or
- (b) He return the ball in play so that it hits the ground, a permanent fixture, or other object, outside any of the lines which bound his opponent's Court [except as provided in Rule 22 (a) and (c)] ; or
- (c) He volley the ball and fail to make a good return even when standing outside the Court ; or
- (d) He touch or strike the ball in play with his racket more than once in making a stroke ; or
- (e) He or his racket (in his hand or otherwise) or anything which he wears or carries touch the net, posts, cord or metal cable, strap or band, or the ground within his opponent's Court at any time while the ball is in play ; or
- (f) He volley the ball before it has passed the net ; or
- (g) The ball in play touch him or anything that



he wears or carries, except his racket in his hand or hands ; or

(h) He throws his racket at and hits the ball.

19. If a player commits any act either deliberate or involuntary which, in the opinion of the Umpire, hinders his opponent in making a stroke, the Umpire shall in the first case award the point to the opponent, and in the second case order the point to be replayed.

20. A ball falling on a line is regarded as falling in the Court bounded by that line.

21. If the ball in play touch a permanent fixture (other than the net, posts, cord or metal cable, strap or band) after it has hit the ground, the player who struck it wins the point ; if before it hits the ground his opponent wins the point.

22. It is a good return : -

(a) If the ball touch the net, posts, cord or metal cable, strap or band, provided that it passes over any of them and hits the ground within the Court ; or

(b) If the ball, served or returned, hit the ground within the proper Court and rebound or be blown back over the net, and the player whose turn it is to strike reach over the net and play the ball, provided that neither he nor any part of his clothes or racket touch the net, posts, cord or metal cable, strap or band or the ground within his opponent's Court, and that the stroke be otherwise good ; or

- (c) If the ball be returned outside the post, either above or below the level of the top of the net, even though it touch the post, provided that it hits the ground within the proper Court ; or
- (d) If a player's racket pass over the net after he has returned the ball, provided the ball pass the net before being played and be properly returned ; or
- (e) If a player succeed in returning the ball, served or in play, which strikes a ball lying in the Court.

NOTE TO RULE 22. If, for the sake of convenience, a Doubles Court be equipped with Singles posts for the purpose of a Singles game, then the Doubles posts and those portions of the net, cord or metal cable and band outside such Singles posts shall at all times be permanent fixtures, and are not regarded as posts or parts of the net of a Singles game.

A return that passes between either net post and the net, but below the top cord of the net, is not a good return because the net should fit flush with the net posts. The purpose of the net is to serve as a barrier from post to post between the players.

23. In case a player is hindered in making a stroke by anything not within his control, except a permanent fixture of the Court, or except as provided for in Rule 19, the point shall be replayed.

24. If a player wins his first point, the score is called 15 for that player ; on winning his second

point, the score is called 30 for that player ; on winning his third point, the score is called 40 for that player, and the fourth point won by a player is scored game for that player except as below :—

If both players have won three points, the score is called deuce ; and the next point won by a player is scored advantage for that player. If the same player win the next point, he wins the game ; if the other player wins the next point the score is again called deuce ; and so on, until a player wins the two points immediately following the score at deuce, when the game is scored for that player.

25. A player (or players) who first wins six games wins a set ; except that he must win by a margin of two games over his opponent and where necessary a set shall be extended until this margin be achieved.

26. The players shall change sides at the end of the first, third and every subsequent alternate game of each set, and at the end of each set unless the total number of games in such set be even, in which case the change is not made until the end of the first game of the next set.

27. The maximum number of sets in a match shall be 5, or, where women take part, 3.

28. Except where otherwise stated, every reference in these Rules to the masculine includes the feminine gender.

29. In matches where an Umpire is appointed, his decision shall be final ; but where a Referee is appointed, an appeal shall lie to him from the

decision of an Umpire on a question of law, and in all such cases the decision of the Referee shall be final.

The Referee, in his discretion, may at any time postpone a match on account of darkness or the condition of the ground or the weather. In any case of postponement the previous score and previous occupancy of Courts shall hold good, unless the Referee and the players unanimously agree otherwise.

30. Play shall be continuous from the first service till the match be concluded ; provided that after the third set, or when women take part, the second set, either player is entitled to a rest, which shall not exceed 10 minutes, or in countries situated between Latitude 15 degrees North and Latitude 15 degrees South, 45 minutes, and provided further that when necessitated by circumstances not within the control of the players, the Umpire may suspend play for such a period as he may consider necessary. If play be suspended and be not resumed until a later day the rest may be taken only after the third set (or when women take part the second set) of play on such later day, completion of an unfinished set being counted as one set. These provisions shall be strictly construed, and play shall never be suspended, delayed or interfered with for the purpose of enabling a player to recover his strength or his wind, or to receive instruction or advice. The Umpire shall be the sole judge of such suspension,

delay or interference, and after giving due warning he may disqualify the offender.

NOTE. Any Nation is at liberty to modify the first provision in Rule 30 or omit it from its regulations governing tournaments, matches or competitions held in its own country, other than the International Lawn Tennis Championship (Davis Cup).

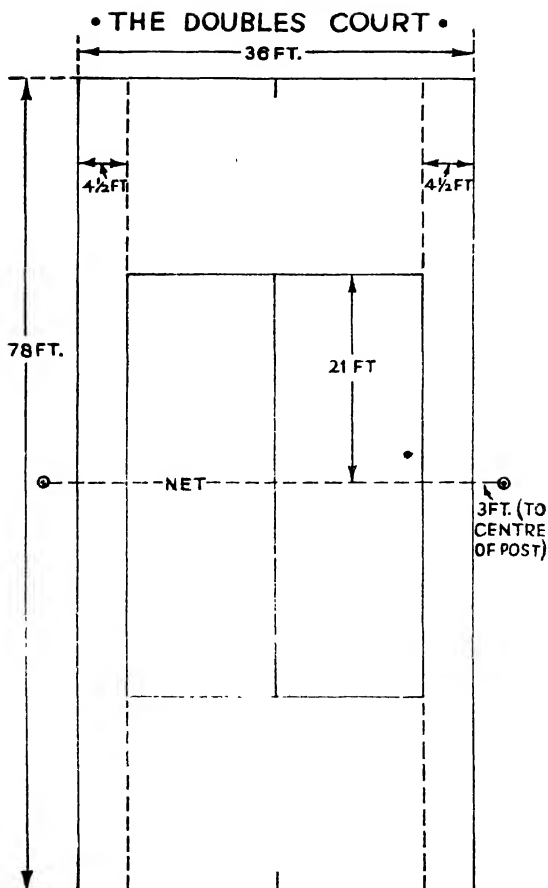
### THE DOUBLES GAME

31. The above Rules shall apply to the Doubles Game except as below.

32. For the Doubles Game, the Court shall be 36 feet in width, i.e.  $4\frac{1}{2}$  feet wider on each side than the Court for the Singles Game, and those portions of the singles side-lines which lie between the two service-lines shall be called the service-side-lines. In other respects, the Court shall be similar to that described in Rule 1, but the portions of the singles side-lines between the base-line and service-line on each side of the net may be omitted if desired.

33. The order of serving shall be decided at the beginning of each set as follows :—

The pair who have to serve in the first game of each set shall decide which partner shall do so and the opposing pair shall decide similarly for the second game. The partner of the player who served in the first game shall serve in the third ; the partner of the player who served in the second game shall



serve in the fourth, and so on in the same order in all the subsequent games of a set.

34. The order of receiving the service shall be decided at the beginning of each set as follows :—

The pair who have to receive the service in the first game shall decide which partner shall receive the first service, and that partner shall continue to receive the first service in every odd game throughout that set. The opposing pair shall likewise decide which partner shall receive the first service in the second game and that partner shall continue to receive the first service in every even game throughout that set. Partners shall receive the service alternately throughout each game.

35. If a partner serve out of his turn, the partner who ought to have served shall serve as soon as the mistake is discovered, but all points scored, and any faults served before such discovery, shall be reckoned. If a game shall have been completed before such discovery, the order of service remains as altered.

36. If during a game the order of receiving the service is changed by the receivers it shall remain as altered until the end of the game in which the mistake is discovered, but the partners shall resume their original order of receiving in the next game of that set in which they are receivers of the service.

37. The service is a fault as provided for by Rule 9, or if the ball touch the Server's partner or anything which he wears or carries ; but if the ball served touch the partner of the Receiver, or anything

which he wears or carries, not being a let under Rule 13 (a) before it hits the ground, the Server wins the point.

38. The ball shall be struck alternately by one or other player of the opposing pairs, and if a player touches the ball in play with his racket, in contravention of this Rule, his opponents win the point.

## APPENDIX

### Regulations for Making Tests Specified in Rule 3

(i) Unless otherwise specified all tests shall be made at a temperature of approximately 68° Fahrenheit and any ball tested shall be at that temperature throughout when the test is commenced.

(ii) Unless otherwise specified the limits are for a test conducted in an atmospheric pressure resulting in a barometric reading of approximately 29.95 inches.

(iii) Other climatic standards may be fixed for localities where the average temperature and/or average barometric pressure at which the game is being played differ materially from 68° Fahrenheit and 29.95 inches respectively.

Applications for such adjusted standards may be made by any National Association to the International Lawn Tennis Federation and if approved shall be adopted for such localities.

A table of such adjusted standards shall be added to the Appendix from time to time as they may be adopted.

(iv) In all tests for diameter a ring gauge shall be used,



consisting of a metal plate, preferably non-corrosive, of a uniform thickness of  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch, in which there are two circular openings 2.575 inches and 2.675 inches in diameter respectively. The inner surface of the gauge shall have a convex profile with a radius of  $\frac{1}{16}$  inch. The ball shall not drop through the smaller opening by its own weight and shall drop through the larger opening by its own weight.

(v) In all tests for deformation conducted under Rule 3, the machine designed by Percy Herbert Stevens and patented in Great Britain under Patent No. 230250, together with the subsequent additions and improvements thereto, shall be employed or such other machine which is approved by a National Association and gives equivalent readings to the Stevens machine.

(vi) Immediately before any ball is tested, it shall be dropped four times from a height of 100 inches on to a concrete base.

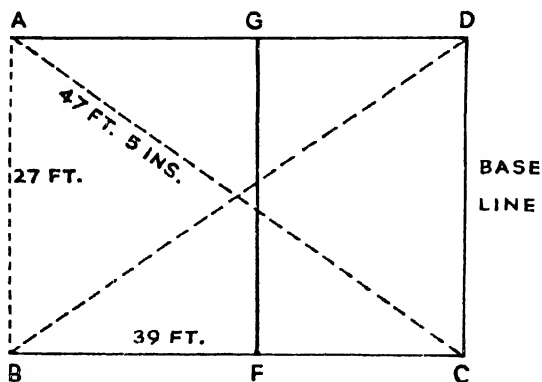
(vii) To ascertain the deformation of any ball, three readings shall be taken, one each of three diameters at right angles to one another, so chosen that initially neither platen of the machine shall be in contact with any part of the cover seam. The average of these three readings shall be the deformation reading.

(viii) After the ball has been placed in position, the contact weight applied, the beam brought to the pointer level, the pointer set at zero, and the test weight placed on the beam, the pressure shall then be applied to the ball by turning the hand wheel at a uniform speed, and exactly 5 seconds shall elapse from the instant the beam

leaves its seat until it is brought to the pointer level, whereupon the turning shall cease and the reading shall be taken.

### HOW TO MARK OUT A COURT

As a doubles court practically includes every line to be found in a singles court, first take the measurements for the latter. Determine the position of the net, and fix in the line chosen two pegs, 27 feet apart (at the



points A and B). Then take two measures and attach their respective ends to the pegs A and B. On the first, which will measure the diagonal of the Court, take a length of 47 feet 5 inches, on the other 39 feet; pull both taut so that at these distances they meet in a point C. This gives one corner of the court. At the point F, 21 feet from B, put in a peg to mark

the end of the service-line. The other corner D, and the other end of the service-line G, may be found by repeating the process. The same measurements on the other side of the net will complete the boundaries of the court. By prolonging the base-lines 4 feet 6 inches in each direction, and joining the four new points thus obtained, the side-lines of a doubles court are obtained. It only remains to mark the central line, by joining the middle points of the service-lines. If a doubles court alone is required, the interior side-lines need not be prolonged to meet the base-lines. In all cases the net posts must stand at a distance of 3 feet from the side-lines, and therefore if a singles game is to be played on a doubles court, the net (unless the posts are shifted and a singles court net is used) should be stayed up to the right height by means of singles posts placed at a distance of 3 feet from the singles court side-lines. These are obtainable from all makers of lawn tennis implements.

It is obviously impossible for a beginner wishing to teach himself lawn tennis to do so merely by learning the 38 Rules enumerated above, nor is it desirable for him to try that method. At the same time, every player should have a general understanding of these rules, and a few words of "unofficial" explanation to supplement the "official" rules may be useful to the reader. Let us consider them in order.

Rule No. 1 deals entirely with the measurements

of the court. The chief points to bear in mind are that the height of the net must be 3 feet at the centre, and that all measurements are to be made to the *outside* of the lines. This means that in lawn tennis, unlike cricket, "*on*" the line is "*in*"; and since the base-line may be as much as 4 inches in width, that is a very important point to remember. It is customary for all ordinary club players to test the height of the net at the centre by means of two rackets, one resting vertically on the ground and the other placed so that the racket face at its widest point rests on the first one. The sum of these two distances, that is, maximum length plus maximum breadth of a racket, is normally within an inch of 3 feet; but such an approximation will obviously not be good enough for serious matches or tournaments, and it is better to use a stick exactly 36 inches in length. The "centre mark" in the middle of the base-line is also important, because the server must stand on the right of it for his first, third, and similar odd services and on the left of it for his second, fourth and subsequent even services.

Rule No. 3 and its appendix are of entirely theoretical interest to the average player, and the extraordinary details in those paragraphs have really been inserted in this book with the intention of showing the enormous care which is taken in the manufacture of a high-standard lawn tennis ball. The detailed regulations which have to be fulfilled before a ball can be stamped with the L.T.A.'s approval

are really quite an eye-opener to the ordinary player, who takes so much for granted that he never worries about such things as deformation and minute variations in size, weight and bound. Yet all these considerations would very quickly spoil our games of tennis if they were neglected.

The next group of Rules --Nos. 4 to 14—are all connected more or less directly with the service. One point worth noting is that although the server's position is limited—he must stand behind the base-line and within the imaginary continuations of the centre-mark and side-line—the receiver may stand wherever he pleases on his own side of the net, even off the court entirely if he wishes to do so. The decision as to which player shall serve first is taken by tossing. The usual method of doing this is by one player spinning a racket and allowing it to fall to the ground, while the other player calls “Rough” or “Smooth”. This calling refers to the surface of that part of the gut next to the handle where the interlacing cross-strings when stroked with the fingers give a “rough” or a “smooth” impression, according to whichever side of the racket falls uppermost.

So far as the actual service itself is concerned, a beginner should note that if he or she throws up a ball with the intention of striking it and then misses it, it is a fault; but if after throwing it up, the server decides not to strike at it and catches it instead, it is *not* a fault. The whole problem of “foot-faults” is a very difficult one to solve, and

the sensible learner will seek the advice of some experienced player as soon as he has developed a style of his own, in order to make certain that he is not innocently contravening the regulations ; after all, no player can keep his eye on the ball and his own feet at the same time ! Many ordinary club players unknowingly serve foot-faults, and it is not until they play in their first tournament that an umpire or linesman will penalise them, and then it often worries them so much that it has a serious effect on their game. So make sure that your normal method of service in every way conforms with the printed rules.

Rules Nos. 12 and 13 provide for the operation of a "let" in certain circumstances. The commonest form of let is when a service hits a net-cord and then falls into the correct court ; in that event, the server is allowed another service, or two more serves if it is the first service which happens to be a let. A let may also be claimed if the receiver was not ready to take a service, but remember that such a service let does not annul a previous fault.

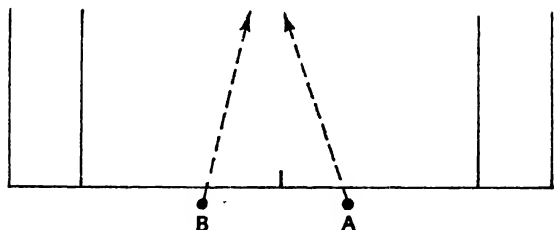
Rules Nos. 16 to 21 are mostly concerned with the winning or losing of points, and they are largely self-explanatory. In order to save unnecessary fagging for balls, many lawn tennis players standing outside the court - and sometimes even outside the service court- -volley or catch the ball and claim the point because the ball was obviously going out of court. Such a habit is liable to become dangerous if or when

the player reaches tournament standard, because strictly speaking he can in no circumstances claim the point. If he catches the ball, he automatically loses the point (Rule 18 *g*) ; if he volleys it and it goes out of play he obviously loses the point ; and if he volleys it and makes a good return, the rally should continue. This is merely one example of the general principle that a ball is never considered to be out of court until it has actually pitched. In fact, a player may be standing near the base-line when he is hit full toss by a fast high service ; even in such an extreme case, the player who is struck loses the point, unless the ball first hits the net, when the service counts as a let.

Rule 22 deals with "good returns". The only point necessary to explain in connection with this rule is the case of another ball lying on the court, and it has been decided that if a ball in play strikes another ball, play must continue, although it is permissible for the umpire to call a let if it is not clear to him whether the right ball is returned or not ! It is also permissible for a player to request that a ball lying in his opponent's court should be removed, provided that the request is not made while another ball is in play.

The next few rules deal with the method of scoring, a system which always seems peculiar to the beginner, but which is a relic of "real" tennis. At first it appears to be unnecessarily complicated, but it does not take very long for the details to be

grasped even by very young boys and girls. It has the advantage of being very fair to both sides, and the idea of requiring a margin of two points or games under certain circumstances leads to much tactical manœuvring, especially when it is coupled with the ruling that ends must be changed after every alternate game. This tactical skill can be brought into use both before and during actual play. In order to help beginners, here is a simple diagram showing what the scores can be when a server is about to serve from behind the right-(A) and left-(B) hand courts :—



B	15 - LOVE	A	LOVE ALL
	LOVE - 15		30- LOVE
	30 - 15		LOVE -30
	15 - 30		DEUCE
	ADVANTAGE TO SERVER		
	ADVANTAGE TO STRIKER		

Rules Nos. 29 and 30 outline some of the duties of the Umpire and the Referee. It should be noted that if an Umpire calls "Fault" or "Out" and then corrects himself and calls "Play", a let must



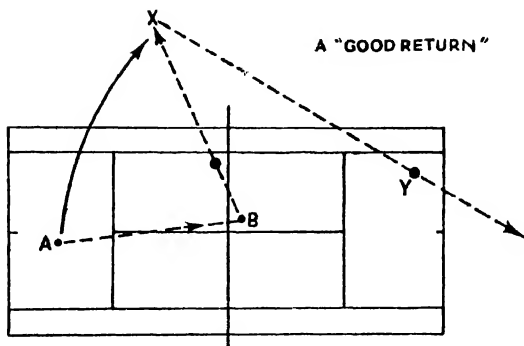
be called. It is also a let if a first service is a fault and the ball rebounds so as to interfere with the receiver at the time of the second service, unless the receiver had the opportunity to remove the ball and negligently failed to do so. Umpires and players should remember, too, that play should never be delayed to enable a player to recover his strength or his wind, or to receive instruction or advice.

The Doubles Game is governed by Rules Nos. 31 to 38, and they are almost self-explanatory. One decision approved by the International Lawn Tennis Federation is that the server's partner is permitted to stand wherever he likes on his own side of the net, either in or out of the court, even if such a position obstructs the view of the receiver. In practice, of course, it would seldom pay to take up such a position, because the chances are that he would be struck by the ball and a fault would immediately be called.

So much, then, for the Rules of Lawn Tennis. On the whole, they are straightforward, simple and natural. The only one which appears to be a little unfair is the extremely rare case outlined in Rule 22 (*c*), which can best be explained with the help of the diagram on the next page.

Player B makes a wide-angled volley which player A just manages to reach at the point X. It is counted as a "good return" if A, taking no notice of the net, sends the ball only a few inches above the

ground so that it pitches at the point Y. Yet perhaps the writer is biased because he was considerably



irritated on the one and only occasion such a point was scored against him !

## CHAPTER IV

# EQUIPMENT

BEFORE you actually play any game, there are certain things necessary or at least desirable—somewhere to play, something to play with (even if it be only a football to kick) and, to a lesser extent, something suitable to wear, especially on your feet. So let us see what you will want if you are going to teach yourself tennis, and also what is the bare minimum which is absolutely necessary even if you cannot have everything that you would like.

### The Racket

First and foremost, there is a tennis racket. Nobody can play without this, as you are not allowed to hit the ball with anything else ! The price of rackets has unfortunately been increasing steadily during the past twenty years. This may be the first obstacle in your path if you wish to take up tennis, and it is one to get over in any way you can. For your very first season it really does not matter very much what sort of racket you use. If you are at school, there may be a common store of rackets from which you are allowed to borrow. If you are at home, it may still be unnecessary to spend money on buying one. Any old racket which your father or

mother once used is better than nothing. If there is any choice, take the *lighter* racket ; it is better, and easier, to play with a light one than a heavy one while you are still growing. You have perhaps heard the phrase "tennis elbow" ; it is possible that you are more likely to suffer from this mysterious ailment if you play with a racket that is too heavy for you. Another point is that you may start playing when you are only about 10 or 12 years old ; in that case, you will probably serve under-arm for a year or two, and the change to serving overhead will be more easily accomplished with a light racket than with a heavy one. Incidentally, there is no need at all to serve in the proper overhead fashion until you are about 13, even if most of your friends do.

After "making do" in this way for your first season, with an old family racket or one which you have borrowed, you should certainly buy a new one the following year. The lucky ones, of course, will start with a new racket from the very beginning. One year is quite enough for anybody to wait, as it is quite likely that the old one you began with is not really very suitable for you, either in weight or in the size of the handle. Still, we will hope that while using it you have convinced your parents that you are sufficiently keen and promising to deserve a new one. When the time comes to walk into a shop to buy it, you will probably find that the salesman can help you. Better still, take an experienced tennis player along with you, if you can, and be

guided by his advice. If you are still young or a beginner, an expensive racket is not necessary, but make sure that it is light and has a fairly small handle. You must be able to grasp it easily and wave it about and not feel it is like some unmanageable club!

Young players generally begin with a racket of 11 ounces;  $12\frac{1}{2}$  ounces is the average weight for 15-year-olds, and  $13\frac{1}{2}$  ounces the common weight for grown-ups, although just at the moment there is a tendency, encouraged by Americans, to work up to  $14\frac{1}{2}$  ounces. Many players like a racket to be light in the head, and perhaps this is a good thing while you are growing, especially for girls. If you want to make sure, look at the "throat" of the racket you are buying for a little screw that goes through the handle there, and balance the racket on your forefinger at this point. If the handle sinks and the head goes up, the chances are that the head is not too heavy. Finally, remember that when it is not in use, you should always keep the racket in a press, and before you put it away in the cupboard for the winter, give the strings a thin smearing with gut reviver.

### Tennis Balls

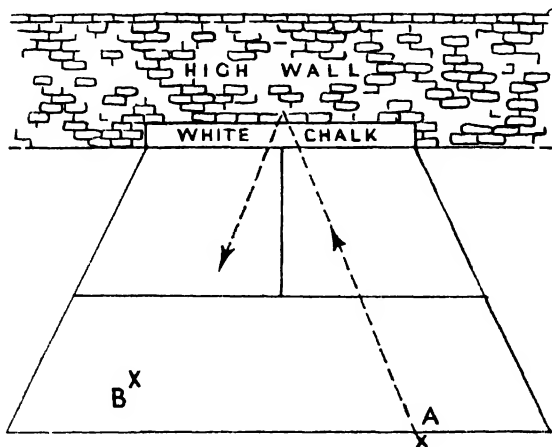
The second necessity before you start to play will be some tennis balls. It will not take you very long to learn that new balls are the nicest to play with. In fact, they add much more to the pleasure

of tennis than a new racket does. All the same, do not let it worry you if you cannot often have them. The strokes of tennis do not depend on the quality of the balls, and you can learn them, practise them, and play them even with old ones. For the sake of both balls and racket, it is best not to play in the rain. Sometimes in tournaments or matches, players are obliged to continue for some time in a drizzle, but nobody really enjoys it. The English climate can be very annoying sometimes, but the only thing to do is to accept it !

### The Court

The last essential is that you must find a court on which to play. This may be possible at school or in a public recreation ground, if you do not possess one of your own. Do not worry if you hear superior people say your court is not a good one. Good courts are certainly very pleasant, but an enthusiast for any sport will be glad to play even in conditions that are not perfect. Tennis is only a game, but if a game is worth playing well, it is worth practising at every opportunity ; and that brings us to the next point. Even better than a tennis court, sometimes, is a plain wall on to a back yard. Once you have learned the strokes, this is a splendid way to practise. No opponent is needed ; simply mark a line on the wall—if you are allowed to !—to represent the tennis net and drive balls up against it as near to this line as possible. You will even

find one ball sufficient ! You can also play quite a jolly game with a partner, something like an outdoor game of squash, as in the following diagram, where A is serving to B :—



Having provided yourself with racket and balls, and having obtained the use of a court, you are almost ready for an actual game. Clothes do not matter very much nowadays when all wardrobes are small. Shorts are acceptable wear at all clubs for both men and women, but that is not to say there is anything wrong either with trousers or with a skirt or dress. So far as mere looks go, they are probably superior to shorts ; and from October to April they may be warmer and more sensible.

### Tennis as a Winter Game

Tennis players sometimes find it hard to decide whether to drop the game in winter or not. It is simply a matter of personal taste. If you are keen, and content, to play any real winter game instead, you may as well do so ; cold, windy conditions are not very suitable for tennis, and even if you manage to enjoy it, it is hard to play well. On the other hand, if you are keener on this game than any other, it cannot do you any harm, and it may do you some good, to keep it up all the year round. If you do, try always to play seriously and as well as you can ; do not allow your game to deteriorate with the weather. It is so easy to get into bad habits and then find yourself worse instead of better in the spring. If you drop tennis completely in the winter, it should not take you more than three or four games to get into reasonable form when summer comes round again.

### Tennis Kit

To return to your original preparations for play, the only really important article of wear is your pair of shoes. You must obtain some proper rubber-soled ones, because walking shoes, with heels, are bad for the court and you cannot run properly in them. The standard makes of tennis-shoe, rather like gym-shoes, generally have thin soles ; this is a pity and a mistake, because your feet are most im-



portant for tennis. As a slight protection, it is a good thing to insert an inner sole or "sock" into the shoe. An additional article which may often be very useful in sunny weather is an eye-shade. You can obtain one quite cheaply, and if your court runs east and west, you may find a shade a big advantage when you are facing an evening sun. Finally, a word of warning to those who wear spectacles : remember that you should not play games with lenses of ordinary glass. If you do not already possess them, you should get a pair of unbreakable or " non-splintering " glass and keep them for games.

## CHAPTER V

### HOW TO HOLD THE RACKET

WE will assume that you are now ready to take your racket in your hand and go out on to a court, but it is no good holding the racket in the wrong way. The question of "grip" is important and should be dealt with before any description of actual strokes. In fact, strokes cannot be successful unless your grip is reasonably sound. An infant 1 or 2 years old may get some food into its mouth with a spoon, but very awkwardly and inefficiently ; this is partly because it holds the spoon all wrong ! Similarly, you may get the ball over the net, but you will not make good shots if you hold the racket wrongly.

There has been more controversy among good players in the past than there is now regarding the best grips. That for the service--overhead of course--has been most generally accepted, those for the backhand and, especially, for the forehand rather less so. Yet there is less dispute nowadays and the majority of really good players are using the same grips. That does not mean that the matter of grip is simple or unimportant. On the contrary, it is not simple because many school-children, and beginners generally, fall into bad habits in adopting a wrong grip by nature which is then hard to

cure ; and it is not unimportant because you will never play very well if you get wrong something which is so fundamental.

The swing you make with your arm, and the stroke resulting from that swing, are partly conditioned by the way you hold the racket. There have been a few notable exceptions to this rule such as some modern two-handed grips, but these are still comparatively rare and only suit certain individuals. At the same time, it is essential that any grip should be a reasonably natural one--tennis is quite hard enough without insisting on unnatural methods of holding the racket. One standard tip is to hold out your right hand as if you were going to shake hands with someone, insert the racket between the fingers and thumb--and there you have your grip !

The so-called "Western" forehand grip seems most unnatural and uncomfortable, but it does sometimes bring results. Again, our own Fred Perry--Champion at Wimbledon in 1934, 1935 and 1936--is said to be the wrong model to copy because he used the "Continental" grip. Probably the best answer, for a forehand drive, is to have the palm of the hand neither *under* the handle (the "Western" grip) nor *over* it (the "Continental") but *behind* it (the "Eastern"). Perhaps it will be best for us to start with the service grip, which is the easiest, and work up to the forehand drive.

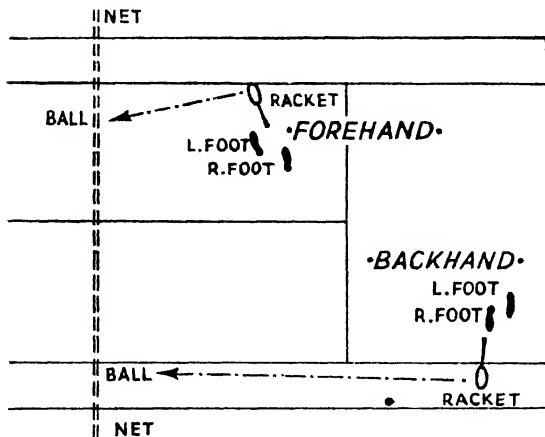
done unconsciously and you no longer have to think of it. As you stand to receive service in an actual game, your right hand need not clasp the racket tightly in *either* grip. You cannot be sure until the ball is struck whether it will come to you on the forehand or the backhand. For this reason, it is a good tip to allow your left hand to hold the racket by the throat, while your right hand is quite loosely round the handle, ready in an instant to tighten on it in whichever of the two grips is correct for the ball as it actually comes to you over the net.

There remains the forehand volley. It has already been stated that the correct grip for a backhand ground shot will also be correct for a backhand volley. You would expect the same to be true on the forehand, and you would be in good company with such a great coach as Dan Maskell, professional and coach at the All-England L.T.C. However, most people do not swing at a forehand volley as they do at a forehand drive, and you will probably find that you can volley quite successfully by using the service grip. If this is so, the same grip—except for slight movements of the thumb along the handle for the backhand—will do for every shot in tennis except one. This one exception is the forehand drive. It is an easy one to remember, or should be, as to most players it is the most important shot of all, and the one which they play, or try to play, most often. We will discuss it further in the next chapter.

If in this position you take your racket back behind your right shoulder and swing at the ball, following through up in front of you and beyond your left shoulder, you will hit the ball *at least* across the court to your opponent's forehand and very likely *too far* across, so that it goes over the side-line. It is the same in cricket. An ordinary ball without spin, such as a straight half-volley, is usually pulled by a novice in the direction of long-on, or even of mid-wicket. You have very likely been rebuked more than once for doing such a "cow-shot"! Now if you do a cow-shot at tennis, the ball will be "out" much more certainly than *you* will be if you do it at cricket!

Obviously you do not want to hit the ball over the side-line, but if you hit the ball in that direction, even inside the court, you are hitting it to your opponent's forehand, unless he is left-handed. Now the great majority of players are right-handed, and an almost equally large majority have better forehands than backhands, so you will often want to hit the ball not across the court at all, but straight down it from your own forehand to your opponent's backhand. It is partly for this reason that you aim to place the foot which is nearer the net—the left foot if you are a right-handed player taking the ball on the forehand—further across towards the side-line than the other foot. At the moment of striking the ball, your left foot is neither straight in front of your right nor directly to one side, but advanced diagon-

ally at an angle of somewhere round 45 degrees.  
Look at this diagram :—



### Position on the Court

Having dealt with the feet, we must now consider what you do with your racket, and then the whole stroke together. Let us suppose that you are waiting for the ball to come to you, either for a service or for a shot in the middle of a rally. If you are a beginner, you will be standing a yard or two *in front of* the base-line, because you do not expect a very hard or deep shot from another beginner. In a few years' time, you will await a first service or a drive just about *on* the base-line. Later still, if you reach tournament class, you will frequently find

yourself a yard or more *behind* the base-line. This is necessary in good tennis, as deep drives pitching near the base-line have to be given time—and space—to bounce and rise again before you play the ball. But to return to yourself—you are facing the net ready to take the ball on either forehand or backhand, and as soon as it is struck you see that it is coming slightly to your right. How do you play a forehand stroke?

### The Complete Forehand Stroke

The actual movements of your feet and racket, of course, take much less time than any description. If a ball is hit hard, especially a man's first service, you are hardly conscious of your movements but make them automatically and as quickly as possible. But the sequence of events is probably as follows. The moment you see the ball coming to your forehand, while carefully keeping your eye on the approaching ball, you turn to the right so that your whole body is facing the side-line. In so doing you will naturally step round and back with your right leg. Your right hand has already tightened on the handle in the forehand grip, which, remember, is a quarter of a turn to the right from the service grip. Immediately afterwards, you begin to swing the racket back and up behind the right shoulder, releasing your left-handed grip on its throat, which was simply to help in keeping the racket poised as you waited for the ball to be hit by your opponent.

As your racket swings up, with its head higher than your wrist, you step forward and half-left with your left foot, so that your feet are now diagonally placed, as shown in the diagram on page 68. Your racket, swinging down and forward to hit the ball, coincides with your weight going down and forward on to the left foot. The ball is struck approximately opposite your body. If you hit it *before* it reaches you, you may "pull" or "sky" it, and you cannot hit it much later, because it will have passed you! The racket, from being behind your right shoulder, has swung well down as it comes round, and it is actually rising slightly as it strikes the ball, so the lowest point of the swing must be just before that.

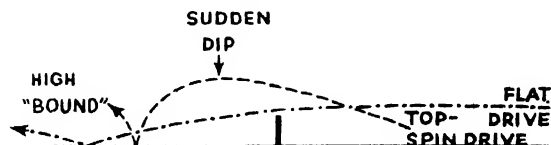
### The Follow-Through

After striking the ball, you "follow through", which means that you and the racket remain in motion. Your feet may still point half sideways, but your body and head swing round to face the front. The racket continues to swing up and round past the *left* shoulder just as it was originally—at the beginning of the swing—behind the *right*. All this takes a long time to describe but only a second or two to execute. You will soon find, as you play, how hard it is to do a good shot and how easy it is to hit the ball out or into the net. But you may have chances to practise the swing when you are not actually playing and it is a good thing to do so. All you require is a racket and room to swing it!



### Flat, Topped and Chopped Drives

In dealing with the forehand grip, we noticed that it was the correct grip for a fast forehand drive hit almost flat or with slight top-spin. You will find that most people hit the ball with this spin more often than not. Study the following diagram, which shows diagrammatically two kinds of trajectories :—



Hitting the ball “flat” means having the face of the racket vertical and its trajectory horizontal at the moment of impact, so that you drive the ball horizontally. Most players find it difficult to play this stroke accurately, because, as can be seen from the diagram, there is nothing to bring the ball down into court except the force of gravity, and the slightest error in the way of lifting it will cause it to go out. Putting on a slight top-spin means that the racket is rising slightly at the moment of impact and that the hand turns over as the swing continues. The rising racket striking the upper part of the ball imparts top-spin to it, just as a descending racket “chopping” at the under part of the ball imparts “cut” or under-spin. The effect of the top-spin is to accelerate the descent of the ball to the ground at the end of its flight ; in other words, to bring it

*into* court. In consequence, a top-spin drive may clear the net by quite a wide margin and yet fall near the service-line, whereas a ball hit "flat" and clearing the net by the same margin would very likely clear the opposite base-line as well !

A "chopped" or undercut forehand can be played with the racket held in the normal service or backhand grip. It will often give accurate control and be useful for returning a difficult ball, such as a fast drive to the side-line or a service which you can barely reach. It will also keep your shot rather low after it pitches and make it more difficult to take, especially on a damp grass court or when a player has a weak backhand. So the chopped stroke is not to be despised, although it must be realised that it is not the fundamental stroke for a drive or return of service because it is slightly lacking in pace ; and, after all, the *pace* of your shots is one of the most important factors in your progress as a lawn tennis player.

## CHAPTER VI

# THE FOREHAND DRIVE

### Footwork

It is proverbially unsound to attempt to run before you can walk. In other words, the elements or foundations of any activity or science require to be mastered before you go on to the more advanced and attractive stages, if you are to make the most of them when you get there. If any end is worth achieving, the means to it are worth studying.

In terms of tennis we have already studied the first fundamental, which is to hold the racket correctly. You can now swing the racket satisfactorily at the ball provided that your body is well balanced. This involves the position of your legs and feet. If you mix with tennis players, or read about those who are prominent, you may learn that so-and-so has "perfect footwork" or that somebody else has good shots but suffers from "bad footwork". This may include not only quickness off the mark and speed in running to the ball, but also the correct position of the feet and placing of the body, even when you have reached the ball or if it happens to be sent quite close to you.

The first and most obvious point is that the feet are likely to be some way apart when you drive a

tennis ball. If you have ever hit a hockey ball or a golf ball (except in putting) or even a croquet ball, you will know that you do not do so with your feet close together. The reason is that if you do anything violent in the way of movement or swing with your feet together, you will probably fall over ! At least you will have to move one foot immediately in order to save yourself from overbalancing. It is possible, however, to serve at tennis with the feet quite close together, because as soon as you strike the ball the right foot can move forward to correct the balance ; and if you want to follow your service to the net, as good players do in doubles, you are already one step in the right direction. But you cannot drive a tennis ball with your feet together any more than you can a golf ball. That is the first point ; now for the actual placing of the feet.

### Position of the Feet

The position of your feet largely determines the way in which your body is facing. Vice versa, if you are determined to face in a certain direction, the positions in which you can place your feet are somewhat limited. This is where many beginners at tennis go wrong. It is common to see boys and girls striking the ball when they are *facing* the net. This error is really not surprising, perhaps, because the ball, after all, has to be hit over the net and your opponent is on the other side of it ! But it makes correct footwork, and therefore good shots, im-

possible. You do not literally *face* the green at golf or the bowler at cricket. You *look* at the bowler, no doubt, but your body is facing in the direction of point or cover-point. The same holds good with tennis. It is easiest to play a good drive in a direction, for the ball, approximately at right angles to the direction in which your body is facing, as you prepare to hit the ball. To play a drive, therefore, you will be facing not the net, but the side-line, that on your right for a forehand and that on your left for a backhand.

The above principle is at least what is desirable, even if it is not always possible. For instance, if you are fairly near the base-line and your opponent plays a short or gentle shot not far beyond the net, you will have to run forward to reach it and you will find yourself facing more forwards than sideways at the time of playing the ball. But every time the ball is hit to you fairly hard and deep, and every time you receive a service, you should turn more or less sideways to play your shot. You do not, of course, take up a deliberate sideways stance beforehand as at cricket; the shots are very different, and, in any case, you want to be equally well prepared for playing either a backhand stroke or a forehand one. The correct attitude for receiving service, therefore, and also the desirable attitude as often as possible in a rally if you have time, is *facing* the net; but as soon as your opponent has struck the ball and you see to which side of you it is coming, you *then*

*turn sideways* to make your swing and play your stroke.

It is usually correct for the foot nearer to the net, as you face the side-line, to be advanced in the direction of that side-line more than the other foot. This is not so in golf. In that game, a line joining the two heels or the toes of the player's shoes may be, roughly speaking, parallel with the direction of the hole ; if extended indefinitely beyond the left foot, it will pass somewhere near the green. But in tennis, though many shots may be played with the line of the feet parallel to the side-line, they cannot all be, and it is not the fundamental position which should be consciously practised and adopted until it becomes second nature.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE BACKHAND DRIVE

THE backhand drive need not be described at such length as the forehand drive, because in many ways the two are similar and the hints given would be the same. The backhand drive, like the forehand, may theoretically be hit flat or with top-spin or with under-spin. We have already noticed that both flat and undercut forehand shots have certain disadvantages ; some players find the flat drive hard to control, while it is generally agreed that undercut strokes are not conducive to real pace. A slight top-spin is therefore imparted to the ball by many good players when they are driving on the forehand. Logically, you might expect the same considerations to apply, and to result in the same practice, in the case of the backhand drive ; but the fact remains that most players from their earliest days find it harder to play the ball on the backhand and are more concerned with simply getting it over the net. You have only to watch a beginner to realise that the backhand is an unnatural stroke.

#### Offence versus Defence

While it is not desirable to be for ever on the defensive on the backhand, it is a fact that most learners are weak and vulnerable on that wing, and

it is easy to preserve this mentality in later days. This is probably the reason why the proportion of tournament players with *undercut* backhand strokes is much higher than it should be. Where more than 50 per cent. hit a forehand drive with top-spin, more than 50 per cent. hit a backhand drive with under-spin. The drive is less fast in consequence, but it is easier to control, at least until you are hard pressed ; then, when you are under pressure, there is always a tendency to lift the ball too high and invite a kill at the net.

Some of the greatest players—Tilden was one of them and he dominated the American scene for years—have hit the ball flat on the backhand and that should probably be your aim. Few have found it so easy to impart top-spin as on the forehand, but Budge (champion after Perry) stands out in the memory. He played his backhand drive with a kind of lunge, and it had no rivals. Such spin as he imparted was top-spin and he could not be forced into rising shots in defence as so many players are, even at the top of the tree. If you are one of the great host of players, then, to whom the backhand is something of a bugbear, take comfort in the fact that the top has been reached even with an *undercut* stroke and there is no need to be ashamed of it !

### Preliminaries to the Swing

Now let us consider the backhand swing, which is very like the forehand. Of two small differences,



one is important and one is not. The latter is simply that as you begin to swing the racket back ; you can maintain your left hand's grip at the throat for a moment to balance it. This was not possible on the forehand, because in that case you immediately swing the racket away from the left hand. The other point concerns your feet. The foot nearer the net -your right foot unless you are left-handed—should still be advanced towards the side-line, but the position does not quite correspond to the forehand drive. We saw there that the left foot is advanced diagonally or half-left ; but on the backhand, the right foot is advanced much more directly towards the side-line ; a little to the right, perhaps, but by no means so much as half-right. These positions and slight differences are clearly shown in the diagram on page 68.

### The Backhand Swing

With the above preliminaries, then, we will now consider the actual swing and see that it corresponds closely to the forehand. We will again suppose that you are awaiting a service—or a drive—and that you are facing the net until you see which way the ball is coming. As soon as it is struck, you see that it is coming slightly to your left. What is the sequence of events ? As you step round and back with your left leg, your right hand tightens on the handle in the backhand grip ; this, you will remember, is practically the same as the service grip,

although there will be slight variations in the position of the thumb. Probably you will be content with letting it lie diagonally across the handle of the racket, but there is no harm in placing it straight along the handle at the back of the racket if you feel that this strengthens your wrist and the subsequent stroke.

### The Complete Stroke

As the racket head swings up behind your left shoulder, you step forward towards the side-line with your right foot. Your weight probably comes on to this foot almost before the racket descends. The racket descends and comes round your body, passing its lowest point just before striking the ball, as the ball is struck— as on the forehand—with a slightly rising swing. It is actually struck in front of your right leg and, in the case of a low bounce, almost under your nose. It is important that on the backhand your eyes should be not only *on* but *over* the ball. If they are, you have the best possible chance of hitting the ball truly, and your drive will keep low even if it is slightly undercut.

On the backhand, there is no temptation to hit the ball *after* it has passed you, but it is easy—and fatal—to hit it *before* it reaches you. This means that you are “scratching” at it because you are nervous of your backhand. It is a common result of being forced on the defensive by a better, or at least a good, player. It is also easy, by some trick

of the light, to snatch at the ball too soon when you are playing into the sun ; but, whatever the cause, it is likely to be fatal. It is very hard to play a correct backhand stroke if the ball is hit some distance in front of you, and particularly hard in the case of those numerous players who use an undercut stroke. They will find that the ball rises too high and, if it does not go out, invites a kill from their opponent. Such shots encourage him to come to the net in expectation of an easy prey. If the day is windy, as it often is in England, and you are playing into the wind, the position is even worse, because the ball will have a still greater tendency to rise.

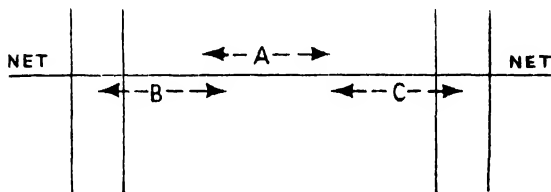
## CHAPTER VIII

### VOLLEYING

THE volley is the stroke, whether forehand or backhand, which you play every time you hit the ball without allowing it to bounce. In good doubles play, half the rallies consist of volleys, while in a good singles game half the winning shots are likely to be volleys ; so there is no doubt of the importance of practising and mastering this stroke. If you consider the basic facts of the size and measurements of the court and net, you will quickly understand why players of an " aggressive " type have always laid emphasis on the volley. If a tennis ball is hit at you with a fairly low trajectory, it is not likely to bounce very much higher than the net ; this is especially true of grass courts in wet summers ! Your return, then, if it is to clear the net and fall in the court, must (if you play the ball after it bounces) either be hit with only moderate force or be hit with great control if you do use force.

If you are a good volleyer, however, the way is opened for you to play the ball close to the net before it bounces. In fact, you may play it before it begins to lose height at all and it may be *above* the level of the net when you strike it. This, of course, makes all the difference in the world, because

if the ball is higher than the net your problem is, comparatively speaking, child's play. That does not for a moment mean that all volleys are easy, but if, even on certain occasions, all you need do is to "kill" the ball by banging it downwards, the stroke obviously has its attractions ! Besides, if you are close to the net, you can bang the ball not only downwards but also sideways. The ball bounces away into the next court or into the side-netting and it is extremely hard to return. Then there are also the "stop" and "drop" volleys, which are heart-



breaking to an opponent on the base-line. Yes, you must certainly learn to volley.

An average lawn tennis player, with a racket in his outstretched hand, can cover a distance sideways of about 10 feet, without moving either foot. In the above diagram, therefore, the singles player A covers the distance shown when he is up at the net, while the doubles players B and C provide an even more formidable barrier.

Fortunately, most boys with any aptitude for tennis are keen to volley and need no encouragement to do

so, but there are others who are shy of this stroke and develop an inferiority complex about it. It is common, especially among girls and even adult women, to meet players who remain near the back of the court whenever humanly possible and dissolve in defeatist squeals if ever the ball finds them near the net ! The fact is that you *can* be a great (singles) player without volleying very much, but you are very unlikely to be so. It is so much harder for a basc-liner to finish off the rally, and the player with more strokes is, other things being equal, more likely to win.

### Footwork and Swing

The questions of position and tactics will be considered later, but we will now assume that you are in a good position and are awaiting your opponent's stroke. You will be facing the net with your racket poised and at a distance from the net of only six or seven feet when the ball is struck and you see that it is coming to your forehand. What do you do, and how do your swing and footwork differ from the forehand drive ? The differences lie more in the swing than the footwork. It is shorter, for the simple reason that time is also shorter. It lacks follow-through because the volley is more of a jab than a drive ; and if the ball is hit near the net and is well above it, the path of the racket-head is comparatively downward. Bearing these points in mind, your actions are much what you would expect, but you

must realise that they will almost certainly have to be performed extremely quickly. If you are at the net, the ball reaches you sooner than at the back of the court, and if your opponent should also be near the net, it reaches you in next to no time !

### Forehand Volleying

Let us now analyse the movements in an ordinary forehand volley. As soon as you see the ball struck to your forehand, and rising slightly, perhaps, so that your volley can be of an aggressive and decisive character, you step round and back with your right foot and take back your racket behind the right shoulder. The swing may be less wide and free than in the case of the drive. As your left foot comes down—half-forward and half-left as before—your racket comes down jabbing at the ball. Some coaches call it a “punch”. There is no harm in putting slight undercut on the ball, almost “chopping” it, to make for greater control. The *place* to which you hit a volley is often more important than the *pace* at which the ball travels. For this reason, it can hardly be necessary to switch to the forehand drive grip which was advised for “flat” drives or slight top-spin. Moreover, in a volleying rally at the net, especially in doubles, there is very little time for switching anything ! At the finish of the stroke, your racket should be somewhere near the level of the net or where the ball was struck. There is no follow-through up towards the left

shoulder and the ball has probably been struck rather more in front of the body than was the case with the forehand drive.

### Volleying on the Backhand

The backhand volley bears to the backhand drive exactly the same relation in its points of difference and similarity. As you see the ball coming to your left, you step round with your left foot and take the racket-head back and upward as before. Then as your right foot goes forward—half-right—the racket comes down ; and here comes the difference. Instead of the wide low swing touching its lowest point just before the ball is hit and then rising in the follow-through round by the right shoulder, there is the downward punch or jab. The ball is hit with the slight undercut and back-spin that is tempting to many in the case of the drive and quite legitimate in the volley. The racket-head has come down, so to speak, through the ball, and may be quite low, at the finish of the shot. The ball has been hit rather more in front of you and with a firm wrist.

At this point it is a good thing for the reader to bear in mind that the word "volley", unlike "drive" or "smash", does not imply any particular degree of force. A "drop-shot" cannot be a drive, for the latter word is applied only to those ground strokes where the ball is hit reasonably hard—for the particular class of tennis—and travels fairly fast. Yet a drop-volley or a stop-volley is



perfectly possible and often very effective. We all realise that a great many points in tennis are won when the other player puts the ball either into the net or out of the court, but it is hard to be sure he will do this. Undoubtedly the best way to win a point is to place the ball out of your opponent's reach ; this may be done not only by hitting the ball past him or over him, but also by dropping it so short over the net that he cannot run forward fast enough to reach it.

### Practising Volleying

If you are literally trying to teach yourself tennis, you can learn most of the fundamentals of volleying by playing on your own against a brick wall or in an old Fives Court or similar building. There you will realise that you must grip your racket slightly firmer for the volley than for the ordinary forehand and backhand shots ; you will also learn to keep your eye on the ball while you " punch " it. If you are not literally by yourself, here is one of the best ways of developing that confidence which is so essential to good volleying.

Go out on to a tennis court with four or five friends and let the best driver try to pass the rest of you when you are all lined up on the far side of the net. Alternatively, you can take it in turns. Player A takes half a dozen balls and stands near the centre of the back line, while B, C, D and E take up their positions about 5 feet from the net

and about 9 feet apart laterally. In that way, the whole 36 feet of the court's width should be covered, and while A hits the balls fairly gently at first, he can work up speed as the volleyers gain confidence. B then changes places with A, C with B, and so on. Girls especially react quickly to such a "drill", and any fear at the thought of a ball being deliberately hit at you rapidly disappears. A similar practice can later be carried out for "smashes", one player lobbing the ball high across the net, at the same time calling out the name of the person he wishes to smash it—just like catching practice at cricket.

### Half-Volleying

The half-volley is played quite differently from either the drive or the volley; even so, it does not merit much separate description. It is quite different because the ball is necessarily hit at the lowest possible point, only just above the ground; this is not the case with the other shots. You will sometimes be compelled to play a low volley, particularly if you are still running up to the net when the ball is returned to the vicinity of your feet, but much more often you will hit the ball at about the level of the net, or higher. The height at which you play a drive is affected—indeed partly determined—by the height of the ball's bounce, and this is affected again by the nature of the court. On good grass courts the bounce is considerable, and it is still more so on hard courts. Hitting a ball at even two feet

above the ground is very different from half-volleying it only a few inches above the surface.

Why, then, does a brief description of the half-volley suffice? Simply because, since it is played only a few inches from the ground, it is an unpromising approach to a winning stroke. From the point of impact, you have to hit the ball *up* 3 feet to clear the net and, unless you are very skilful, it is likely to rise further still and invite a "kill" at the net. Moreover, the shot requires very delicate touch and the slightest fault in the ball's bounce makes that delicacy of no avail. Few of us are able to play always on perfect courts and certainly you are not likely to do so in schools. On bad courts, faulty bounces are frequent and half-volleys become even more hazardous. If you are near the back of the court, you have no excuse for half-volleying because you should have time to move your feet and make a proper drive, which is a much more aggressive shot. Near the net, a half-volley may save you from being passed by a ball hit wide to one side or the other. Similarly, if you are moving up to the net, a successful half-volley may enable you to return your opponent's first shot and continue your course to a good volleying position.

In spite of these minor advantages, the half-volley is not a stroke to be cultivated, although when it is performed properly it certainly gives a pleasurable feeling of conceit! By all means try to play it well when it is the only shot open to you, but do not play

it for its own sake, still less go actively looking for occasions to do so. Tennis, like life, has enough difficulties without your creating any more ! Since it is an impossible shot to play aggressively, you should concentrate on accuracy and placing. Unless you are lobbing, which is unlikely—a half-volley lob is very difficult and dangerous—try to keep it low over the net ; that is the vital point of the stroke and much more important than hitting at all hard. Hard hitting in the case of half-volleys is bound to be risky on account of the fact that you inevitably hit the ball upwards to clear the net. If it is hit hard, the ball will continue upwards for some distance further, and this will invite an aggressive shot from your opponent. You must realise, in fact, that it is difficult to play aggressively—a ball which keeps low, and it should be your aim rather to direct it to a part of the court beyond the reach of your opponent.

### The Stop-Volley

One more type of volley requires description, and it is generally referred to as the “ stop-volley ”. In playing this stroke, you aim to play the ball as gently and as “ dead ” as possible over the net. Good players can do this even if they are several feet, if not yards, from the net. Miss Ryan, a regular Wimbledon Doubles Champion between 1920 and 1934, was an adept at this shot. Yet it is a stroke which is more likely to be effective in

singles when your opponent is at the back of the court, especially on the kind of surface which makes it difficult to start or turn quickly. Perhaps your opponent has just played a passing drive as you came in to volley and you take it rather wide and low about half-way between the service-line and the net. If you can accurately make the ball just clear the net and no more, it is very likely the best shot you can play in the circumstances. You require little swing and less follow-through, and you will probably put a slight cut on the ball. The stop-volley is less often employed in doubles, but there will, of course, be times when both your opponents are right at the back of the court and it may be effective then.

Often more useful than a stop-volley, which simply depends on being too short for your opponent to reach, is the volley which is equally short but which, in addition, goes away sharply to the side. This, of course, cannot be played from very far back; you need to be right up at the net. In that case, do not be satisfied with a stop-volley. If you make the slightest fizzle of it, or if your opponent is just more nimble than you thought, he will probably beat you with his return. Never forget, when taking a ball right up at the net, to use the advantage of *angle* which this position gives you. As well as dropping the ball short, turn it sharply to right or left; you will then be twice as sure of winning the point.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE LOB AND THE SMASH

THESE two strokes, the lob and the smash, although so different in themselves, are naturally connected because the second is the probable and desirable answer to the first. If your opponent is at the net, you may beat him either by sending the ball within his reach at a pace and to a spot most awkward for him or, more certainly, by putting the ball out of his reach. If you send it past his forehand or backhand, your stroke is known as a "passing" shot. If you put it over his head, it is called a "lob". Obviously the lob is rather a risky shot, because if it does not go high enough, it will be at a perfectly convenient height for your opponent to "kill" with a "smash". Conversely, if you hit the ball too high above him, it will probably clear the base-line. In either case, you have lost the point.

Because of these obvious difficulties and risks, the majority of beginners, and even of ordinary club players, are rather chary of the lob. Moreover, to the casual and ignorant observer there is something inferior about a shot which pushes the ball gently up in the air compared with anything in the nature of a drive which goes relatively hard and low. Yet it is a great mistake to despise the lob or to regard

it as anything less than a valuable and important stroke which is quite essential to the equipment of a good player.

### The Actual Stroke

We shall see later the chief kinds of occasion for using the lob and merely consider now *how* it is played. Clearly, to hit a ball from an initial height of two or three feet over somebody's head—and, moreover, over the full reach of his outstretched arm and racket—it is essential to hit from underneath with your racket face tilted upwards. The ball is not hit with great force and there is little follow-through; nevertheless, you must make a slight swing, and it is best in making it to conceal your intentions as long as possible. You will often find that you can start by taking the racket back a little as if you were going to play an ordinary drive. Each second, or even fraction of a second, that you deceive your opponent is valuable, for the sooner he realises your intention to lob, the greater the chance of his smashing it or running back for it successfully.

### The Lob-Volley

One kind of lob requires no swing of the racket at all and that is the lob-volley. This is a matter of most delicate accuracy, and even good players are quite likely to misjudge it. It is a stroke which should not be played often, but it is worth trying

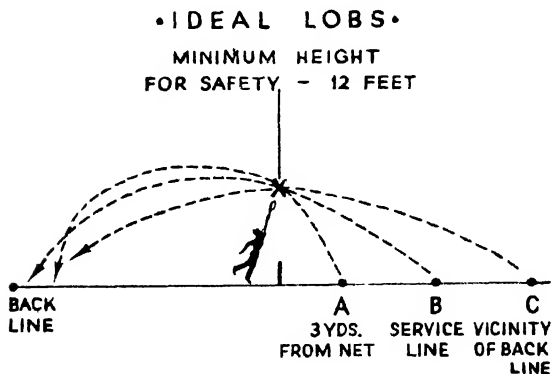
on those occasions when one senses instinctively that it will be a certain winner if only it is played accurately. Such occasions may arise when both sides are up at the net, quite close to each other. For example, if the ball is hit fairly hard at you, your opponent's weight may be placed forward rather than backward and he will not be able to turn round very quickly and chase a ball which has been lobbed over his head. All you need to do on such an occasion, then, is to oppose your racket to the ball without any swing or follow-through, with its face inclined at the correct angle to lob the ball in the desired trajectory. Only practice will make you skilful at this, and in this particular case even practice will not make you perfect. You may easily lose as many points in this way as you win, but you will probably feel so pleased with your apparent mastery of the situation when all goes well that it seems worth taking the risk !

### The Use of Spin in Lobbing

In the case of the lob there is little question of putting spin on the ball. You must not seek to increase your accuracy by using undercut, for this makes the ball come down more slowly and more vertically. Even if it goes out of your opponent's reach for smashing, it will be comparatively easy for him to chase and return it after it has bounced. A slight top-spin would of course, conversely, make it very difficult for him to chase your lob, because



it would come down faster and bounce more sharply away. Such a lob will sometimes be a perfect winning shot but it is difficult to play accurately. As we have seen, it only requires a small degree of error for a lob, so far from being a winner, to be almost a certain loser. The best policy is almost always to play a lob quite "flat" without any kind of spin.



The above diagram, drawn to scale, shows that, if a 6-foot man is standing near the net it is essential that a lob should pass over the net at a height of not less than 12 feet. On the other hand, if the lob goes *too* high over the net, say 20 feet, the chances are that either the ball will pitch beyond your opponent's base-line or else he will have time to

run back and play it after it has bounced in the court. To sum up, therefore, a lob must—

- (a) Be high enough to be beyond the reach of an opponent at the net.
- (b) Be not so high that the ball bounces a long way into the air and so affords an easy stroke to an opponent who has had time to run back.
- (c) Be hit with just sufficient strength to make it pitch near the base-line but not beyond.

### The Smash

Any overhead shot—other than service—is usually called a smash, although it is so difficult to play a thoroughly aggressive stroke high above your head on the *backhand* that as often as not, with average performers at least, a backhand smash is little more than a high volley and lacks the decisive element which the word “smash” usually indicates. The policy to adopt in such cases depends on the degree of skill you have attained. Because a high ball within someone’s reach invites a smash, and because a smash so often is—and still more often should be—a decisive winning shot, there are psychological considerations which possibly affect what you should aim at and which affect the actual performance of the majority of players. The player who has just struck the ball, making perhaps a poor and feeble lob, *expects* to lose the point. You, on the other hand, if you have progressed beyond the beginner’s stage, fully realise as you stand near the net waiting

for that feeble lob that you *ought* to win it. Moreover, in the case of a match or tournament, the spectators and your partner (if you are playing doubles) all *expect* you to win it. All this is quite enough to make you a little nervous, even if you are not conscious of it; if you are not, so much the better. The less nervous you are, the more chance there is of your playing a good shot. In fact, if a player knows himself to be weak overhead, he may easily get caught up in a vicious circle of being nervous because he misses smashes and missing smashes because he is nervous!

If everybody is expecting you to win a point, it is arguable whether it is better to risk an outright winner or to play for safety. Really it all depends on the circumstances of the moment, on your opponent, on your partner perhaps, and on the score. This is not the place for a lengthy digression on tactics, but there will clearly be occasions when you try to make your backhand smash a winner and others when you will play for safety. It is very easy to hit the ball out of court and you need to concentrate on bringing it *down*, either by bringing the racket down through and under the ball—“cutting” it severely—or, better still, by throwing the racket face right over on top of the ball as you play it. It is easier to play these backhand strokes across the court than straight down it, to one or two o'clock, so to speak, rather than eleven or twelve. So that is what your opponents will expect, and you may

find a shot straight down their forehand side-line effective, even if it is not hit very hard. If your idea is to play for safety, concentrate at least on putting the ball in court—and in a sensible part of it.

### Opportunities for the Smash

The ordinary smash is, of course, not played back-hand, but above or slightly to the right of your head, like a service. Naturally, the great majority of smashes are played before the ball bounces, although occasionally it will pay to allow a high lob to bounce up from a hard court before you kill it. You may be fairly stationary not far from the net, or you may be moving—almost running—backwards trying to keep pace with a good lob which threatens to go out of your reach. Or again, you may be running forwards following a drive or service of your own to the net or simply watching a high shot by your opponent which will be best returned if you can get up to it before it falls too low to smash. It is obvious from all these opportunities for smashing that foot-work is very important, but it is no easy matter to think about the position of your feet as you play a smash. Somehow a ball coming over your head requires such concentrated attention that there is none left for anything else!

In many games you are told to “keep your eye on the ball”, but there is probably no occasion in any game which demands stricter adherence to that injunction than the moment before a smash in tennis.

You are about to hit very hard—perhaps with all your strength—a ball which may be not only moving at an angle across you but also rising quite steeply or falling with ever-increasing velocity, while you yourself move partly sideways and partly forwards or backwards. In such circumstances, it is probably best to let your feet look after themselves, though there is no doubt whatever that in fact your left foot—if you are right-handed—must be in advance of your right, exactly as in service, if you are to put any vigour and swing into your smash. Indeed, you will find that you play a smash with an action not unlike that for service.

From what has already been said, you can probably guess the two prime requisites for a smash : one is to watch the ball like a lynx, and the other is to have plenty of self-confidence. This second requirement is easier said than done, but at least you must *try* to feel confident. Notice the occasions when you do a good smash, and give yourself a mental pat on the back. Do not brood over failures or allow yourself to suppose that, because you may have missed the first smash of the day, you are going to miss most of the rest ! Nothing succeeds like success ; it is easy to think of players in ordinary classes of tennis who get down-hearted over their smashing, while most of us have seen players of the greatest fame and eminence miss a relatively easy smash on the Centre Court at Wimbledon. The chances are that if you worry you will only get

worse, and that will be very disheartening in doubles for your partners ; so for their sakes as well as your own, do not be despondent. Look at the ball the whole time and tell yourself that you are going to hit it firmly and cleanly ; then you probably will.

### Modern Developments

Overhead play began to be really aggressive in the last generation. Nowadays in good-class tennis it is uncommon to allow a difficult lob to bounce or to play it in a defensive kind of way, either before or after it bounces. Yet not all great players are deadly overhead. John Bromwich, who was runner-up at Wimbledon in 1948, was comparatively unimpressive overhead. Jacques Brugnon, one of the four French " musketeers " of the 'twenties, could smash badly out of nervousness. Yet both Bromwich and Brugnon won almost every doubles championship of the world in their day, and that in spite of the fact that there is normally more smashing in doubles than in singles ; but they won *in spite of* weak smashing and because of an almost infinite skill in other respects. There is no doubt whatever that strong play overhead—both smashing and service—is a great asset to any player and one which is well worth cultivating. Both Bromwich and our own " Bunny " Austin before him would have been still better players but for their weakness in this respect. The same weakness is noticeable in English women, too, in comparison with their American sisters. As soon

as you convince an opponent that you have a good smash, you make him feel that he must not try to lob you because he will not succeed ; in that way, you compel him to play you without employing an essential stroke, which is almost like making him box with one hand tied behind his back.

### Smashing from the Back of the Court

Finally, you may sometimes smash a high-bouncing ball from any part of the court—even as far back as the base-line—*after* it has bounced. Remember still to keep your eye on it and do not take up your stance too firmly as it bounces. It may rise at a slightly different angle from what you expected, and you will miss your shot if you are not able to move swiftly forwards or backwards, as the case may require. Remember, too, that the further back in the court you are, the flatter will be the trajectory you wish to impart to the ball. It will be more like that of a service and less like that of the more usual smash near the net. When players miss these back-of-the-court smashes off a ball that has bounced high, it is usually because they hit it too much down and put it into the net, and *not* because the ball's trajectory is too flat and it goes out.

Here are a few final tips about smashing. In all smashing, your aim should be not only to hit the ball hard but also to place it well. Try to hit to one side or the other, or else place it down the middle between a doubles pair. Do not reveal your inten-

tions beforehand ; for instance, it is perfectly possible to smash to the opponent's backhand by making a last-minute twist of your racket. You do not, of course, change your mind at the last minute ; that would be fatal. But at the last minute you do what you always in fact meant to do.



## CHAPTER X

### THE SERVICE

THERE are two obvious reasons for taking great trouble over your service. One is that the stroke which starts every rally is a very important one, and the other is that it is the only stroke in lawn tennis which you should always be able to execute precisely in the manner you like best. In other words, not only is it very desirable to have a good service but also it should be possible to ensure it. You can stand, swing, and throw up the ball exactly as you choose, and this should be a case where practice really does make perfect.

Because of the way the racket falls behind the back in the middle of the swing and also because of the manner in which spin or kick is imparted to the ball, the actual swing is harder to *describe* than the motions for an ordinary drive. Probably the best way to study it is not by reading a book but by watching some player in your neighbourhood who serves well. Wherever you live, it should be possible to find out where the nearest open tournament is held ; there is probably at least one in your county. If you live in a place like London or Birmingham or anywhere near the south coast, there should be several within reach, and it does not cost

much to go and watch, except perhaps on the finals day. Every county has a lawn tennis association and produces a team to play matches, doubles in the summer and singles in the autumn, and again you can always go and watch. Notice carefully how the good players serve and try to go through the same motions. Ask anyone who looks amiable to advise you which is likely to be a good match to watch or if there are any Wimbledon players about. You can always try copying a swing ; all you need is a racket and room to swing it, no court, and not even a ball.

### The Service Action

(i) *The Body*. Meanwhile, here are a few tips about the service action. Do not take up position, with feet roughly at "stand easy", *facing* your opponent, and do not hold your racket in the grip for a forehand drive. Those are two fundamentals. There may be things you could do in this attitude—for example, swatting a fly on a wall just in front of you and slightly above your head—but serving a tennis ball is not one of them ! You could only give it a feeble push. Face a little to the right—assuming you are right-handed—and use the back-hand grip. You want to think more of chopping wood than of swatting flies ! Many good players start with their body and feet facing about half-right. There is no harm in going even further and facing, to use cricket language, cover-point rather

than extra-cover ; you can at least try it and see if it comes naturally. After all, the greater the angle through which you rotate and swing, the more weight you may be able to put into your stroke.

(ii) *The Racket.* With the above kind of stance and the balls held in front of you in your left hand, take a good look at your opponent's position and the service court at which you are aiming. The racket will point in that general direction and may, if you like, be raised sufficiently to be just poised against your left hand. Now swing it down, back and away behind you as you throw the ball up ; it does not, of course, take as long to do as to say. From out behind you at something like shoulder level, the racket rises to be nearly vertical, only to drop behind your back as your wrist "breaks". It then re-ascends quite smoothly to the highest point you can reach with arm outstretched, not bent. It is at this point that you strike the ball, and it is most important, both for the power of your stroke and for bringing a fast serve down into the court, that it should be the highest point possible.

(iii) *The Ball.* It follows that the highest point you can reach to strike the ball is the place to which you should throw it, for at the top of the ball's ascent there must be a fraction of time before it falls when it is stationary, and it will be easier to strike accurately at this instant than when it is moving. When you have practised the plain swing with a racket sufficiently, practise with a ball too. It does

not matter at all whether you hit into court or not—probably you won't at first—but just go on practising the co-ordination of racket and ball until you can regularly throw the latter to the right height and the right place, neither too far in front of you nor behind you nor sideways, and at the right time to meet the swing of your racket. This is not easy at first, but you must gradually become sure of hitting the ball firmly in the middle of the racket, with no air shots and no wood.

(iv) *The Feet and Legs.* So much for the swing of arm and racket; there are also your legs to be considered. We have seen that your initial stance must be facing half-right if not more. With many players, the toe of the left foot is actually further across towards the forehand tram-lines than the right toe, but there are also many others who do not turn as far to the right as that. Facing about half-right, then, you place your left foot within an inch or two of the base-line and your right foot something like 12 inches or a bit more from the left. Almost the whole weight is on the right leg, which is straight, while the left leg may be slightly bent and the left foot slightly raised, if you like, with only the toes touching the ground. As you start the swing and throw up the ball, both knees may be bent, both heels off the ground, and the weight more evenly distributed. The knees straighten as you reach up to strike the ball and, if you are also on your toes, you really are stretching

yourself as high as possible. It is most important that you should do this, especially if you are not very tall. Nothing is more pathetic than to see players striking the ball about 6 inches lower than they really need. A bent elbow is the commonest cause, so be on your guard against this.

### The First Service

Most players' first service is, of course, harder than their second. Just how fast the former should be and how slow the latter is something which each player has to work out for himself. It is very much a matter of pros and cons, and your practice may vary according to your feelings—and especially the way your service happens to be working—on any particular day. An electronic device at Philadelphia is reported to have shown that Richard Gonzales serves a ball at 112 miles per hour, and obviously the faster a serve is, the better, if it is right. On the other hand, the harder you hit the ball, the more energy you waste if it is wrong! Remember, too, that almost anything is better than a double fault. Absolutely "dolly" services are not infrequently returned into the net or out of court, whereas a double fault loses the point irretrievably. If it is going into court fairly often, you should probably make your first service as hard as possible; but it is no good slamming the ball into the net time after time. If your service is not working well, you should slow down a

little until you have found your touch and become steadier.

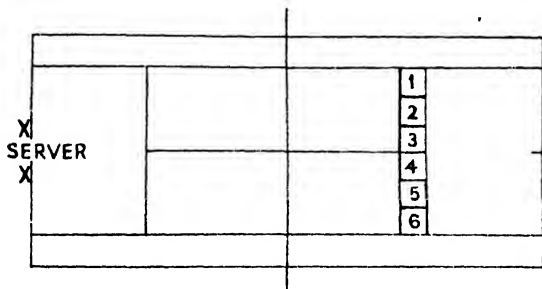
### The Second Service

A similar rule applies also to the second service—the harder it is the better, provided you do not serve doubles! On different occasions and with different players, all sorts of considerations arise. If, unfortunately, you have a very weak second service, it may be better to serve the first *not* too hard but regularly into court, rather than go for aces at the cost of repeated faults which necessitate falling back on your weak second serve. Many beginners fall into the bad habit of striking their second service too quickly after it is obvious that their first service is a fault. This is a bad thing to do for two reasons; firstly, your opponent may not be ready, and secondly, your second service should be a deliberate and carefully aimed stroke—otherwise you are liable to present your opponent with a double fault.

### Variation of Service

Every player should vary his service. You should not serve too often in exactly the same way, except in short spells, perhaps, when a particular kind of serve seems completely to defeat your opponent and you might as well go on with it. Even then he may with practice learn to cope with it. Every player of either sex, even at quite moderate levels

of lawn tennis, should vary the placing of the service. One good tip, which was probably originally tried out by Jack Crawford, the Wimbledon champion immediately before Fred Perry, is to mark out three extra rectangles in each service court, and then try to serve into any one of the six as it is nominated by a friend. A practice court marked out in this way would look like this :—



If your friend calls out 1 or 6, you try to serve wide into the rectangles near the tram-lines ; if he calls 3 or 4, you must aim straight down the middle ; and so on. It is a grand feeling to have the confidence that you can place your service more or less where you like, and this "rectangle method" undoubtedly helps to develop that assurance.

It is obviously a good thing to serve more often to your opponent's weaker side, but you must try both sides to find out which this is. However often you serve, say, on his backhand, you do not want him to be sure that you will continue to do so. If he

is sure, you are giving him less to worry about, and your aim should be to worry him more, not less. It is the same with a second service as with a first ; if you want a good serve to be improved by variety, you also want a weak one to be rendered somewhat less ineffective in the same way. It is a vital rule in both singles and doubles to vary both your service and your return of service at least sufficiently for your opponents never to feel quite sure where the ball will come next time.

### General Observations

Most good men players have served in the same kind of way for many years now ; giants of the past such as Tilden were little different from the champions of to-day. The general practice is to make the first serve very fast and almost " flat ", and then to impart considerable spin to the second. Rather short men are obliged to impart some spin to their first service in order to be sure of it falling in court ; the same is true of those women who serve really hard, but there are unfortunately very many whose service is not hard enough to matter and so it needs no spin to assist in controlling it. The greatest difference in recent years between American and English girls has lain in the harder service of the former. Briefly, *they* serve like men and our girls do not. That is one reason why nowadays there are always four American girls in the semi-finals at Wimbledon.



Girls as well as boys should take men as their models for serving. There is no earthly reason why both sexes should not serve in the same *kind* of way, though male muscle and height will always be a certain advantage. If you are less than 5 feet 6 inches and cannot serve hard enough for the ball to clear the service court when you hit it "flat", you might as well serve underarm! That is perfectly true, and, conversely, you may as well serve underarm until you are tall enough to have some chance of developing a good overhead service. Some old-fashioned lady players between the two Great Wars had underarm services which were certainly unimpressive but more *effective* than the majority of feminine overhead services seen in ordinary tournaments. One need not go back as far as that, either; one British Davis Cup player still plays in the Mixed Doubles at Wimbledon with his wife, who serves underarm. It sometimes causes derisive titters, but she usually wins her service! Once these two played Drobny, the hard-hitting Czech, and his partner; Drobny won his first game with four "aces", but his fair opponent won the next game almost as quickly with four underhand services!

### Serving with Spin

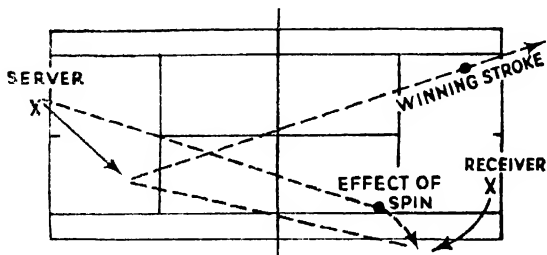
To return from this digression, then, most men hit their first service "flat" and put some spin on their second. There are two reasons for this spin,

even in the case of tall men ; one is that it makes a comparatively gentle service harder to take, and the other that the more looped trajectory of some spinning services gives more time—especially in doubles—for the server to get up to the net. Shorter men and the best women put some spin on almost every serve, thus enabling themselves to hit the ball harder and yet bring it down into the service court. You should try hard to impart this spin while you are still in your 'teens ; it is easier then than later. You will not succeed merely by reading a book, so try to find someone who can show you. If you never have any other tennis lessons from a competent coach or professional, it would be worth having a few just for this.

It is a good tip to make the maximum use of spin by occasionally serving very wide to an opponent's backhand in the left hand court, especially in singles. The ball will break and bound away, and if your opponent still manages to return it, you will have almost the whole half-court open for your second shot. The diagram on the next page makes this clear.

Many otherwise competent tournament players of both sexes go through life with comparatively feeble second services, although other inferior players have somehow got the knack of imparting spin. To do it, the ball is almost always struck from left to right, except by left-handed players, and the racket hits the upper rather than the lower part of it, sweeping

it from bottom upwards. It may strike the right *side* of the ball, producing "cut" or "slice", or the left side, producing more of a "kick". This last seems the more effective and is done by many of the leading players, but it is not easy; most of them arch their backs and bend over backwards on top of everything else! Try hard to find someone



to show you; you may with luck discover an ordinary club player locally who is no great performer in a general way but who somehow has this particular knack. Or perhaps your school may be able to obtain, very cheaply, an instructional film on tennis from one of the better-known firms of sports specialists. Seeing a film repeatedly, perhaps in slow motion, is really an excellent way to learn.

## CHAPTER XI

### SINGLES TACTICS

SPEAKING generally, there are certain "types" of tennis player, and most of us conform to one or other of these types. Whether at ordinary club level or in the most exalted circles, there are some who are dubbed "base-liners" as opposed to others of the volleying, net-storming type. Again, some are rather impatient, and try as often and as soon as possible to finish a rally by a winning stroke. Others adopt waiting tactics and are willing to play a game of endurance and attrition, in which they concentrate on returning the ball safely back into court time after time, thereby hoping to win not so much through their own aggressive strokes as through their opponent's errors. One sort of game may suit your strokes and your temperament best as a general rule, but what sort of game you actually play on any particular day is something which to a great extent you may decide for yourself.

The chief extraneous factor in tennis is, of course, your opponent. If he is considerably better than you are, his strokes will probably put you, willy-nilly, on the defensive, or at least the general pattern of the game will be dictated by him rather than by you. This is inevitable when circumstances are

too strong for you ; and if he is really much better than you, the probability is that he will win anyhow. Yet on all the hundreds of occasions when two approximately equal players meet, it is possible for either of them to vary his tactics and to make the other to some extent fall in with his plan of campaign. We may, then, consider both what kind of player you are likely to be in a general way and also what variations of tactics and play you should try to employ on different occasions and against various kinds of opponent.

#### “ Volleyer ” versus “ Base-liner ”

Most young people - and probably this applies to girls as well as boys—like to imagine themselves great net-players, succeeding by skill of volley and severity of smash against humdrum and comparatively timid opposition ! It is inevitable that youth should be attracted by an acrobatic and violent type of game, finding more satisfaction in a point won by a fierce smash than by, say, an accurate lob. Yet there might be more skill required for the lob, and, in any event, a point is always a point in tennis ; everything, so to speak, counts “ one ”. The young cricketer who enjoys a gigantic swipe to the leg boundary more than a delicate cut or glide can at least argue that the former is more likely to be worth four runs— but you cannot claim that at lawn tennis !

To a great extent, this instinct of youth is right and should be encouraged. Most great players *are*

fine volleyers ; most competent players *are* (for that class) comparatively good at the net. Where two players are equal in other respects, the better volleyer *will* win ; and finally, tennis *is* the better for the spice of variety introduced by net-play. If, then, it is broadly desirable to advance to the net and volley or smash your opponent's return, what should be your policy about the precise time and occasion for going there ?

First of all, it is necessary to realise that the net is really a rather exposed and risky position ; some impetuous players are rather slow to recognise that fact. At least, it *is* exposed and *can* be risky if you neglect the requisite precautions or forethought. A weaker player, seeing his stronger opponent at the net when he himself is playing the ball from somewhere near the base-line, is apt to feel that everything favours his adversary. This, of course, is untrue. In fact, if the definitely stronger of two players is at the back of the court when his opponent comes to the net, he will not be at all perturbed nor imagine that he is bound to lose the point. So the weaker player we envisaged just now was influenced rather by an attack of nerves or an " inferiority complex " than by a true appraisal of the situation. Do not for one moment suppose that, if somebody is giving you a sound beating when you stay at the back of the court, you have only to advance to the net to frighten him into making a whole series of bad shots.

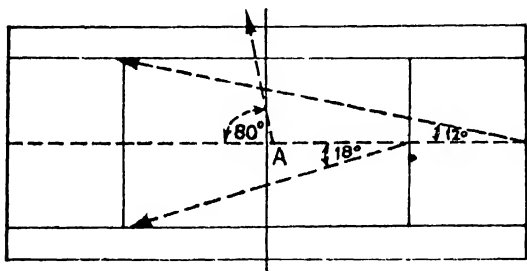
### Some Pitfalls associated with Net-play

It has already been stated that the net is an exposed position ; this is so for at least two reasons. Firstly, you have placed yourself several yards nearer your opponent, and for that reason, whatever shot he plays, you will have only about half as long to see the ball coming and to react accordingly—as you normally have near the base-line. If he hits the ball really hard, you will have very little time indeed ! Secondly, it is difficult for human beings to run backwards or, in most cases, to execute a very rapid “about-turn”. For that reason, if you have gone up to the net, you will have your work cut out to get back to the ball if it is lobbed out of reach over your head. Consequently, if both a hard drive and an accurate lob are likely to give you serious difficulty at the net, you obviously must think twice about going there. The mere fact of advancing to the net does not win the point for you.

Of course, all this is only one side of the matter ; otherwise, we could not have agreed that the instinct of youth is sound in wanting to advance to the net. Once you have reached the net, it is perfectly true that you may not have very much time to see the ball coming to you, but what about the converse ? Your opponent will not have much time to see the ball when *you* play it. Nor is this all ; the most certain way to win a point at lawn tennis is to place the ball out of your opponent's reach, and the commonest way of doing this is to hit it at an angle

so that it goes away over the side-line too fast or too sharply for him to get to it.

Now if you are in the middle of the base-line and hit the ball in a direction more than about  $15^{\circ}$  from a straight line down the centre, it is unlikely to fall in court. If you are in the middle of the service line when you play a stroke, the corresponding angle will be about  $20^{\circ}$ . The nearer you advance to the net, the wider is this "angle of strike" open to you,



until if your racket meets the ball almost exactly as it crosses the net, the angle is not far short of  $90^{\circ}$  to right or left.

It can be seen from the above diagram, which is drawn to scale, that when you are close to the net at the point A you need hardly hit the ball *forwards* at all, but you can deflect it to either side almost at right angles. Now it is obvious that your opponent, if he is near the base-line, cannot possibly get to a ball that goes so sharply sideways as this; it will



either go into the side-netting or else bounce twice long before he can reach it.

It is clear, therefore, that although being at the net may, in certain circumstances, have its dangers, for the above two reasons, taken together, it is potentially a winning position. By the time your opponent's reflexes can respond to your stroke, it may easily have beaten him. It is because of the wide "angle of strike" open to the volleyer that the best players always volley well and that of two—in general—equally good players the better volleyer is likely to win. So you must make up your mind to become good at the net; and the best way to teach yourself this "skill" is simply by lots of practice. It does not matter in an ordinary game with a friend whether you win or not; it is far more important that you should improve your game. So go up to the net as much as you like whenever you are playing with a friend and you will learn by experience to foresee whether the ball is coming to your forehand or your backhand. You will also learn by practice to recognise the lob which you cannot reach and to turn quickly enough to get back to it.

### Girls and the Volleying Game

Do not be content to be a mere base-liner because some of your friends are, especially if you are a girl. There have always been—and still are—women players who reach almost the top of the tree by

playing this kind of game, but when they meet an equally talented player who is good at the net, they have a very up-hill task. It must be remembered, of course, that on the average women are several inches shorter than men and also have shorter arms, so their reach with a tennis racket is appreciably less than a man's. This means that more drives down either side-line and more lobs overhead will be out of their reach. Also, since they run a little less fast than men, they will often fail to get back to a lob which they have to chase. For these reasons, the risks of going up to the net are greater for girls, and a larger proportion of them play a base-line type of game. In spite of all these drawbacks, however, the potential advantages of the net position still hold good. The best women to-day play an extremely masculine sort of tennis and volley as well as many men, and it is undoubtedly worth while, if you are really setting out to teach yourself the game, to keep that ideal in mind.

### The All-Round Game

Enough has probably been said to stress the advantages of a volleying game, especially as most young enthusiasts want to play this kind of game anyhow. Yet it is no better to be a mere volleyer—that is, a player whose only good shots are volleys and smashes—than it is to be a mere base-liner. You must teach yourself to play an all-round game. At cricket, a sufficiently good bowler need never

make any runs as a batsman and a sufficiently good bat does not need to bowl from one end of the season to the other ; but you cannot divide tennis into compartments like that. If you are good only at certain strokes and bad at others, you will not get very far. As we have seen, it is difficult for the mere base-liner to win at tennis because the small " angle of strike " open to him from the back of the court restricts his chances of making winning shots. His opponent may *miss* a shot ; that is a different matter, but it is not easy for him to return the ball completely out of his reach.

Let us now consider a few examples from famous players. John Bromwich, the Australian we have already mentioned, is comparatively weak at the net, especially overhead ; if he were not, he would certainly have won the Wimbledon Singles title. Yet his inability to kill the ball as players of that class can usually be relied on to do has been a great handicap. Joan Curry has been one of the best English girls ever since the second World War, but her play at the net is not the equal of her base-line driving and she is at a great disadvantage in playing the best American girls, who can all volley and smash well. Helen Wills (later Mrs. Moody) was the leading lady player of her day and she achieved her many successes *largely* by base-line play ; this was only possible because she was, on the base-line, without doubt the best player in the world. If your drives are merely as good as the

other person's and his volleys are better than yours, he will beat you. Similarly, if you are just as good as he is at the net but rather inferior to him in ground-strokes, he will again beat you. Now comes the question, if the net is the best position from which to make winning shots, why is it that ground-strokes are so important?

The answer to this question brings us back to a previous remark that the net can be a risky place unless it is approached with due precaution and forethought. Probably the fundamental principle in all lawn tennis is that you should only go to the net in certain circumstances. To put it in another way, in singles you can properly go to the net if your preceding stroke is of a certain kind and a certain quality. Where two players are indistinguishable in their strokes, the one who is more intelligent in choosing the moment to go to the net will win. What most players want, of course, is to have all the advantages of the net position without any of the attendant risks! Yet these risks should not be over-estimated; let us try to weigh them up impartially.

We have seen that a good shot can quite easily pass you at the net or go over your head; it is simply a matter of space and measurement. Whatever you do, you cannot from the middle of the court reach both the side-lines; you cannot, of course, do so on the base-line, either, but the point is that there you will have time to take a few steps

towards one of the side-lines while the ball is approaching. You cannot do that at the net because it reaches you so soon and it will have passed you, very likely, while you "take a few steps". Now if you cannot cover the side-lines from the net position, you also cannot be sure of defending the almost infinite space above your head. So, if your opponent plays a good shot, you are almost certainly going to be in difficulties.

### Following-up a Good Return

The chief precaution you can take before advancing to the net is to reduce the chances of your opponent playing a good shot. If your preceding shot is almost out of his reach, or hit very hard, or pitches about on his toes where his only stroke is the usually inaccurate half-volley, his return will probably *not* pass you ; and because of all your advantages at the net, a shot that does not pass you will to a great extent—depending on the level you have reached—play into your hands. This is one of the reasons for the attacks of nerves which we have seen may affect a player on the base-line when he sees his opponent advancing to the net. If he cannot quite definitely place the ball out of the volleyer's reach, the odds are on the latter winning the point. So the basic principle for the would-be volleyer—and that is what we all are or ought to be—is to come to the net on a shot sufficiently good in itself to worry the other player. If he is in difficulties

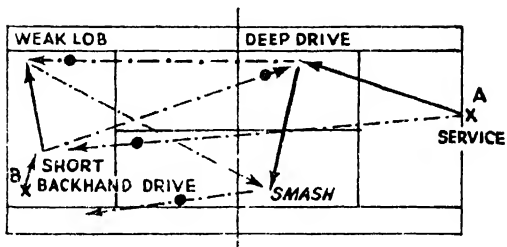
when he plays his shot—barely reaching the ball or running full stretch—the additional worry caused by consciousness of your advance to the net will hardly allow him to play a very good or accurate stroke.

The two diagrams opposite should be carefully studied. In the first one, the server is already near the net when he makes a deep drive to his opponent's *backhand* corner, so he might as well stay up and smash any weak return or volley any fairly good one. In the second diagram, the server, with a deep drive into the opposite *forehand* corner has got his opponent on the run ; this gives the server the opportunity to advance to the net and play a cross-court volley to win the point.

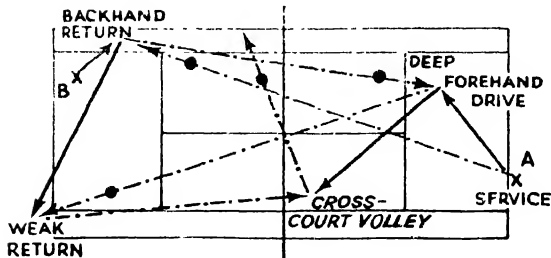
It follows, then, that you will chiefly come to the net on drives which are either hit hard or well angled, especially if they are directed to the other player's weaker side. At the beginning of a match against an unknown opponent you will probably assume this to be his backhand, but you must try to confirm this assumption as the game goes on. Even if 95 per cent. of players are stronger on the forehand, that leaves room for one in every twenty to be an exception, and you are sure to meet that one sometimes. It is very annoying to lose a hard-fought game and only to learn afterwards in the changing-room that your opponent's weakness is his forehand, and you never realised it ! If only you had spotted this, you would probably have won.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVANCING TO THE NET

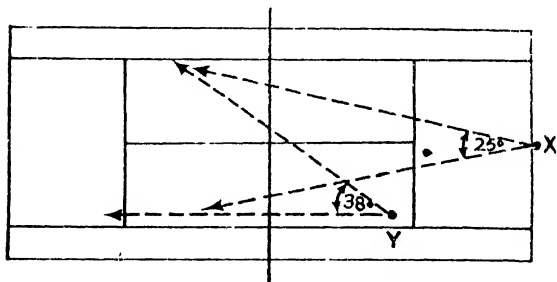
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While you certainly should play as much as possible to the corners of the court to make the other fellow run—on the principle that he will not play his best shots when he is out of breath—it is not always a drive to the corner which is best followed to the net. Sometimes a shot down the middle is equally effective. The reason for this is that your opponent, in the middle of his base-line, has to make his shot through a rather *narrow* angle



if he is to pass you on either forehand or backhand. He cannot hit the ball so that it crosses the net within an inch or two of the side-line because in that case the ball, travelling outwards at an angle, would be certain to pitch out of court over the side-line. So in the above diagram it can be seen that it is often better to be up at the net when your opponent is playing a shot from the point X—with a  $25^\circ$  angle of possibility—than when he is at Y with a  $38^\circ$  angle.



Nevertheless, a famous Wimbledon commentator maintains that in his experience as an onlooker at the Centre Court over a long period of years, the players who go the farthest in that tournament are those who have the ability to make the fullest possible use of the corners of the court.

A most important consideration is the *depth* not only of your last shot but also of the shot before that, the one by your opponent. If his shot pitched near your base-line and you were on or behind the line as you took it, then no matter how good a drive you may play, you should not go up to the net on it. The reason is that if you start from the base-line, you cannot really reach the net before the ball is returned. It is when your opponent plays a short one, pitching somewhere near the service line, that you can follow your stroke to the net. You have started by moving forward to get to the ball and it is easy to carry on as far as the net. You are almost certain to arrive there before your opponent has had time to hit it past you, so you ought to be ready to deal with his return when it does come.

A cardinal virtue in all singles play is "to keep a good length" with your drives; that means continuing to pitch the ball as near to the far base-line as possible. This is often insufficiently appreciated by the inexperienced player, but it really is vital. The reason, of course, is simply that a short stroke to the service-line invites your opponent to follow his next shot to the net, where he is more likely than

not to win the point. In order to keep him from the net, therefore, you must keep a good length. The depth of the shot you play as you advance to the net is also important; the deeper it is, the longer you have both to get to the net and to see the ball coming when you are there. Those are two important points well worth remembering.

### Following-up a Service

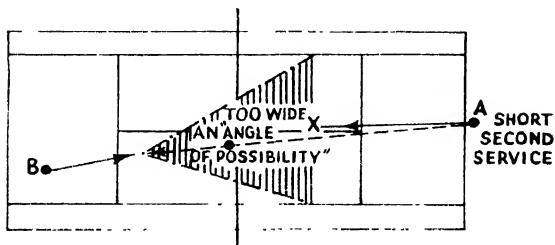
We have seen that you should not go up to the net if you are right back on the base-line to begin with. The obvious exception to this is the following of a service to the net. In doubles, this is regularly done, because the first pair to get to the net has a distinct advantage. Obviously two can cover the net better than one—even to the outer side-lines—and there is usually much more volleying in doubles. In singles, on the contrary, very few players make a regular habit of following their service to the net. It entails an exhausting amount of top-speed running and since no one can really cover the whole length of the net, the receiver should theoretically be able to make a return which will pass the in-coming volleyer. The latter's best chance occurs after a very good serve which it is not possible for the receiver to return except rather defensively or inaccurately.

### Occasions when it is Better not to Advance to the Net

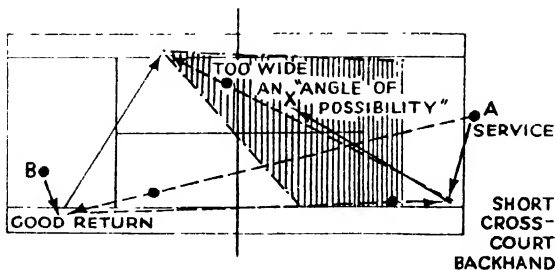
From the two diagrams opposite, it will be seen in each case that if A, the server, advances as far as

# OCCASIONS WHEN IT IS WRONG TO ADVANCE TO THE NET

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2



the point X, he will leave a wide angle for B's return. So the ordinary player, whose second service is comparatively weak, will hardly ever follow it to the net, except as an occasional matter of psychology or surprise. It is not much good following a first service to the net until it has developed into a fairly effective one.

Good players go to the net to widely differing degrees. Jean Borotra, one of the world's best players—and *the* best volleyer—between the two Great Wars, did so frequently ; but there is every possible variation to the other extreme of *never* following a service to the net. This latter plan is quite common with men and very common indeed with women. It is all a matter of each person's taste and temperament, depending on the severity of service, speed of foot and skill at the net. Certainly as a regular rule, the majority of players should not follow their service to the net ; but done occasionally, it will be the more effective through being impossible to foresee.

### Summary

The general aim in singles, then, should be to become an all-round type of player, steady off the ground and sufficiently accurate to pass a rash volleyer with drives and lobs, but eager also yourself to get up to the net for a winning volley. Your drives should be deep to keep your opponent away from the net, and you should wait for his mistakenly

short ball to go up yourself. It is, of course, little use playing a game which is perfectly correct according to the advice you may have read and heard if, in fact, such a game admirably suits your opponent. No two players are alike, and they are not all to be beaten by the same tactics, however sound those tactics may be theoretically. Certain players have beautiful flowing drives, better than their volleys ; they can win points more easily from the base-line than from the net. It is no good whatever keeping a " good length " against them. You will probably do better if you intersperse your deep drives with deliberate short ones, sometimes angled, to keep such an opponent on the run and to prevent him from settling down to the rhythm of his own drives.

On another occasion, you might meet an opponent who can volley but not smash ; in that case, you must lure him to the net with short ones and then lob over his head. Again, some players can run quickly enough across the court, sideways, but are very slow to spot a drop-shot which necessitates running rapidly forwards. These shots are often very effective and, when they are, they may annoy your opponent as well as making him lose his breath ; it all helps ! Remember, though, that it is best to play a drop-shot when the other fellow is right back on his base-line and you are not *too* far back yourself. He will then have the maximum distance to travel to reach the ball, and the less time the ball spends in the air, the less time he has to reach it. Finally,

it may on rare occasions be profitable to adopt tactics which do not normally suit your own game. If you are losing steadily, you must try everything you can think of, even if it be something that does not usually succeed.

## CHAPTER XII

### DOUBLES TACTICS

THE strokes and tactics used in doubles are rather different from those in singles and are well worth studying by any keen player. If you are good at singles, you can almost certainly become a good doubles player too by taking pains. On the other hand, just because the two are not quite the same, it is always possible that you will be considerably better at doubles. This is a pleasant thought if you are already doing well at singles, and a consoling one if you are not ! In ordinary club tennis, for instance, among players who never think of playing in tournaments, mixed doubles and ladies' doubles are played rather differently from men's doubles because the women seldom go to the net. So we really have to consider all three types of doubles — men's, ladies' and mixed — because you may wish to take up any one or two of these.

In ladies' doubles, there is a great deal of baseline play, with perhaps the server and both her opponents at the back of the court and only the server's partner at the net. The latter very seldom plays an actual stroke, as her opponents try to avoid placing the ball within her reach, though she may be for ever trying to make up her mind to " poach ",

and cut off the ball at the net. If the opponents are good at driving and lobbing out of her reach, the rallies may be very prolonged. This is still more the case where all four players keep near the baseline. In mixed doubles, the men usually come up to the net whenever possible, thus reducing the lengths of the rallies (whether their volleys are successful or not!), but there may be long duels between the two women more or less lobbing to each other over the heads of their partners.

### The Importance of Volleying in Doubles

Broadly speaking, the better the class of tennis, the more girls play at the net. We have seen already that they go up less than men because of their smaller reach and comparative lack of speed. The risks of going up are thereby increased for them, and it is certainly no good going to the net if the drives and lobs of the opposition are a class better than your volleys. Yet it may be worth trying to volley, even in fairly mediocre tennis, if everyone is about the same standard, for then the volleyer need not fear anything very good in the way of passing shots, and he may win points against opponents who are not used to avoiding a player at the net.

Mixed doubles and ladies' doubles are never quite the same as men's doubles, but they approximate to it more and more as the tennis becomes of a higher class, because more girls are learning to volley well



when they are up at the net. Even in singles we have seen that the best women to-day, mainly Americans, play an attacking game with plenty of volleying ; and this is so although the more humble female performer is rightly chary of going to the net without good justification, as she lacks the speed and reach to cover it. Much more in doubles, where there are *two* partners to cover the slightly wider court, it is desirable for both sexes to play a volleying game. It is certainly done in the higher levels of tennis, and we must all aim at doing it, though success will come more slowly to some than to others.

### The Advantages of Service

When both players of one pair are at the net and both their opponents are at the back of the court, it is obvious that the former are in the attacking position. One player on each side—not the server or the receiver—can be at the net to start with. The server can get there, if he is quick, by the time the ball is returned, whereas it is obviously impossible for the receiver to be there so soon. Therefore the serving pair can always be both at the net first, which is a great advantage. In good tennis, the service is an advantage in singles, too, but it is more so in doubles. So if you win the toss in doubles, you should always choose service and try hard to win all the odd games—on your serve—so as to be continually one game ahead of the opposition. This is encouraging for you and worrying for them.

Psychologically you have the advantage and that is quite important ; but remember that your advantage is only psychological. If *either* side " holds " its service throughout and *once* wins the other side's, that side will win the set, regardless of who won the toss and served first. If they did, they can win the set 6-3 ; otherwise it will be 6-4.

### Following-up a Service

What is your policy to be when your side is serving ? Obviously the server makes as good a first service as he possibly can and follows it to the net, where his partner is already on his toes. It is an offence to tread on the line as you serve or to cross it with either foot before hitting the ball, but you want to cross it as soon as possible afterwards. If you have a good service action, your right foot will automatically move forward as you hit the ball, because the vigour of your swing would make you over-balance if it did not. This is certainly true of the first serve, though you will probably serve the second rather more gently. Quite often, of course, the first service will be a fault, but you must not wait to know if it is

You do not need to be a fast " runner " in the accepted sense of the word in order to follow a service to the net quickly. The burst of speed required is only a short one—not more than 10 yards—and it really comes under the heading of " quickness off the mark ". If you are keen to follow the

title of this book and teach yourself lawn tennis, this is a branch of the game which will repay individual practice. There is no question of a racket or balls or a court ; all you have to do is to carry out a few "standing starts" or some "running on the spot" practices, or even the older "walk-run" exercises. For "running on the spot", you start quite slowly and gradually work up to your fastest speed, with your arms working vigorously all the time. The idea of the "walk-run" exercise is to walk 10 yards briskly, then run 10 yards, stop dead—not an easy thing to do—walk 10 yards, run 10 yards, stop dead, and so on. You will be surprised at the improvement in your quickness off the mark after a couple of minutes of that simple exercise two or three times a week. Later, as a help to enable you to race after lobs, you can throw in an occasional "right turn", "left turn" and "about turn".

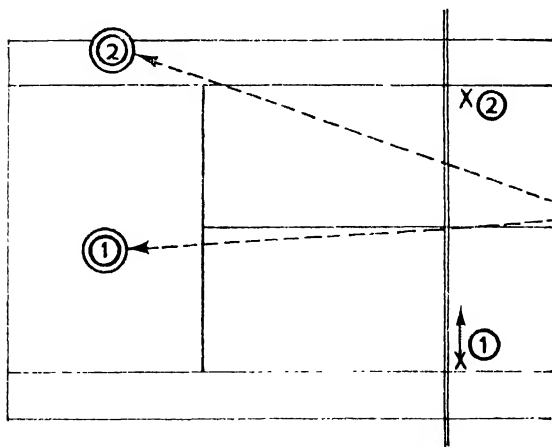
In spite of such exercises, you may not actually get right up to the net before the receiver returns the ball, but you do want to advance as far as possible, so that his return presents you with a possible volley at about net height and not with a very low one or even a half-volley which you are unlikely to play accurately as you run forward. So start forward automatically as you serve ; if you have to stop and come back—because the service is a fault—it is only a step or two. It won't tire you much, even if you do it quite often ; but the difference between getting and not getting a yard nearer

to the net each time your service is correct may win or lose you the match.

### Placing of the Service

Now let us consider the question of the placing of your service. Naturally it will not always be the same because you wish the receiver to be ignorant, until you actually strike the ball, where it will pitch. He must therefore take up a central stance, that is to say, equally well placed for a serve to his forehand or to his backhand, which in fact means that a fast service right on the middle line or the side-line may be out of his reach. If you *always* serve to his backhand, however, he would stand a foot or two further that way and then you could never put the ball where he could not reach it. So you want to vary your serve enough to tie the receiver to a central position ; at the same time, this does not debar you from serving much more often to one side than the other, if circumstances demand it. There is a good deal to be said in favour of serving down the middle line, for the receiver's possible angle of return is then distinctly limited. An important point is that, practically speaking, he cannot play a passing shot down the side-line straight past the server's partner, who, of course, is standing at the net. If the receiver hits the ball far enough out to the side to pass this opponent without hitting him, it will probably go out of court. So a service down the middle line reduces the receiver's choice

of action and gives the server's partner confidence. If he feels like it, he can occasionally move inwards to try for an interception almost simultaneously with the receiver striking the ball. This is too risky if the position from which the receiver returns the serve is such that he could *either* play across court or drive down the side-line—and you do not know which he will do. The following diagram explains these rather complicated statements :—



For Service (1), the server's partner dare risk a step inwards towards the centre of the court with a view to a possible interception, but for Service (2) he must *not* move inwards, because a return parallel to the outside line would then pass him. Such a

passing shot is obviously more difficult from Position (1) than from Position (2).

### Serving into the Right Court

There is also, of course, a great deal to be said for serving on your opponent's *weaker* side, whether it be forehand or backhand. With most people it is the backhand, so with the majority of players a service down the middle line in the right court is very desirable on both counts. This is certainly the correct service for most occasions. Unless you believe the receiver to be better on the backhand than on the forehand, you should try to serve down the middle at least three times out of four—and very likely nine out of ten. Just occasionally you must try an angled serve out towards the side-line, but only often enough to keep your opponent guessing.

### Serving into the Left Court

The position is different in the left court, because the middle-line service goes, presumably, to your opponent's forehand which will probably suit him. On the other hand, there is the advantage of limiting his angle of return. It is not easy to weigh up the pros and cons, and indeed they depend on the individual player concerned. Probably there is not much in it either way, which means that variation of service is doubly desirable. In the early stages of a game, it is a good thing to place about half your serves to the receiver's backhand and about half

down the middle ; then watch the results to see which policy pays better. If by any chance his backhand is stronger than his forehand, you will concentrate on the middle line ; but with the majority of opponents a policy of " fifty-fifty " will not lead you far wrong.

#### Action after Return of Service

You follow your service to the net as fast as possible in doubles. As soon as your second service is fairly respectable and you are out of the " rabbit " class, you follow that one as well. You may not have heard that old far-fetched story about the celebrated Australian tennis player of a number of years ago. His second service was a particularly slow one, so he decided to take a course of quickening exercises, something like the ones suggested earlier in this chapter. The results were beyond all his expectation, and when he next played, he served so slowly and ran up to the net so quickly that he hit himself with the ball on the back of his own neck ! Well, you cannot all expect to run as quickly as that, but in doubles, if you are the server, much more often than not the ball will be returned to *you* and your next shot is a volley ; if it is a half-volley, you may be sure that either it is a good return by the receiver or you have been slow.

You must not be impatient at this stage. If the ball comes to you quite high, it may be possible to volley or smash it down decisively to win the point,

but on the numerous occasions when the ball comes at about net height, you should not try to win the point immediately. Remember that you have to play this volley more or less in motion and, in addition, a little further from the net than the perfect volleying position. So you must not expect too much, but be content to put the ball back into play accurately and in a way that does not give much scope to the opposition. It is best to aim at somebody's toes, probably those of the receiver ; the next shot is then almost certain to be a rising one, and this time you *are* in the perfect place to deal with it.

### Individual Responsibilities

Shots down your partner's side-line are, of course, his responsibility, but you may find you get muddled over lobs and those returns which come in the centre between you. Only much practice and common sense will teach you both what to do about these shots down the middle. Usually the ball is a little nearer to one player and he will instinctively take it, but occasional muddles are bound to occur. You must try to make these muddles as infrequent as possible, because they always make you look rather silly and they are a psychological tonic to your opponents. There are two possible considerations for these occasions which are worth bearing in mind, though not strong enough to regard as rules :—



- (1) With an ordinary pair of players with weaker backhands and both right-handed, the partner to whose *forehand* the ball comes may return it better than the other—on his backhand—so this justifies his taking it in a border-line case.
- (2) Some good players believe that in the middle of a rally, especially a rather fast one at the net, that one of the two partners who *last* hit the ball somehow sees its course to and fro a trifle better than the other. The reason for this is that he is looking *along* its flight from his own racket while his partner looks on from an angle. In that case, it will be better for him to take the next shot too, if the ball comes down the middle.

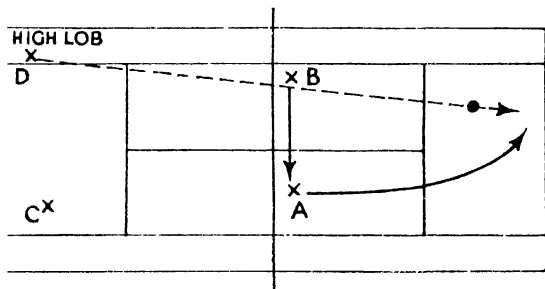
### Dealing with Lobs

There are different schools of thought about lobs, and each pair, especially of regular partners, must think out some policy for itself. It is often said that you “go for your own lobs”, that is to say that a lob is the responsibility of the player over whose head it goes. (You *smash* your own lobs, of course, but we are now considering those which are out of your reach.) It is doubtful whether this rule of going for your own lobs is a sound one in general, but it certainly is at the service. The server, we have explained, wants to run up as quickly as possible, and he cannot do this if he has at the back of

his mind a fear that the return is actually going to be a lob over his partner's head, which he himself will have to chase ; and such a return is quite a common one. The server cannot run two ways at once, and he will not be able to run *forward* so fast if he is half thinking of a possible need to run *side-ways* and *backwards*. So it is a good thing to make it a rule that the server's partner, if lobbed by the receiver, is responsible for dealing with the situation. He must decide instinctively and very, very quickly whether or not he can reach the ball for a smash ; if not, he must turn to chase it. It has already been explained that the server's first volley as he runs up to the net is often a difficult and always an important stroke, and he should be left free to concentrate on it.

Apart from this one occasion of the service, it is quite debatable whether the lobbed player or his partner should chase the ball. As the ball comes high over your head, you at the net are facing *forwards* and will have to turn through 180° if you are to run after it and play it when it has bounced. If you take a fraction too long to decide that you cannot smash it, you may be too late in turning ; but your partner will quite naturally turn half side-ways to watch the ball and may be able in that same instant to realise it is going out of your reach. He will then have only to turn through 90° and get off to a quicker start for chasing the lob than you could. As he runs back behind you, he should call out " mine " or " right ", and you should automatically

cross over so that you exchange courts. The following simple diagram explains these movements :—



It is fatal to find yourselves one behind the other ; it only leads to panic-stricken running this way and that. So if you are the one chasing the lob, there is no harm in adding the word "cross" to your shout, all in the same breath. A partner who has enough sense to cross anyhow, without being told to do so, will also have enough sense not to feel insulted ; while if your partner is not very bright, the sooner you call "cross" the better ! You will at least be on the safe side in doing it.

## Position Play in Doubles

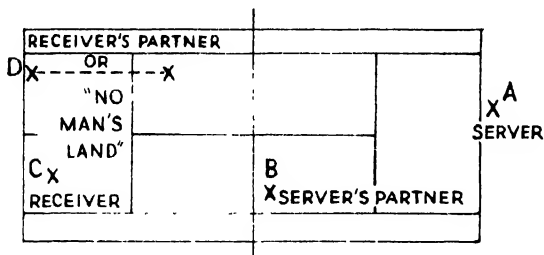
So much for the side which is serving ; it remains to consider their opponents, of whom the receiver is the more important. Of all the four players, the receiver's partner is the only one whose initial position is in doubt. As we have seen, the receiver's

position is more or less fixed, while the server's partner is certainly at the net at the moment of service ; he should be fairly close to it and, of course, in the correct place laterally so that he can cover his side-line without being too far from the middle of the court. With the server himself established behind his base-line, the positions of three of the players are determined and more or less fixed. The fourth player, the receiver's partner, has two or three positions open to him. He may stand right up, or right back, or between the two. Yet he cannot stand *anywhere* between the two. That part of the court behind the service line is sometimes referred to as "No Man's Land", and in good doubles you are not likely to see anyone deliberately standing there. So when your partner is receiving service, it is best to position yourself in one of two places, on or behind the base-line, or else in front of the service-line. Incidentally, in a friendly game, the second of these two positions will enable you to see which services are faults, a useful asset when there is no referee.

The initial positions in a doubles game are, therefore, as shown in the diagram on the next page.

Most people think that a doubles pair are best placed for a rally if they are level with each other, that is, either both up or both back, but not one up and one back. We have seen that the receiver obviously cannot reach the net as soon as the server ; but if he definitely expects to advance—

which involves an expectation of making a reasonable return of service more often than not—his partner may as well be up near the net already. An obvious example arises in every mixed doubles when a woman is serving to a man. Women are comparatively slow at running up on their serve; most men are better than most women in any given class of tennis. Consequently, the chances are in favour of the man's return being a fairly awkward



one for the woman to take, perhaps pitching at her feet as she advances.

The same circumstances arise in all fours where the receiver is, if anything, a better player than the server. The receiver probably considers himself likely to make an aggressive return which can best be utilised by two volleyers, so it is correct for his partner to be up at the net already and for him—the receiver—to follow up his own return. In a level four, whether men's or women's, on the other

hand, there is no hard and fast rule ; each pair can suit itself. Some prefer the receiver's partner to go up, some like him (or her) on the base-line. This means temporarily abandoning the attack to your opponents, but not abandoning the point. You must try all the more to play well, and drive or lob so accurately that they derive no advantage from their position at the net.

### The Return of Service

The receiver of any service plays, for this once, the most important shot in all tennis. It is surprising, perhaps, but true that the return of service is an absolutely vital stroke, deserving all the concentration and practice which you can give it. It is a good thing never to play it in a casual or slack manner, even in the feeblest and friendliest of fours, because in a match it is all-important ; so you must always try your very hardest to play the right kind of shot. Once you have returned the ball adequately, that is, with a shot which is very difficult for either opponent to kill, the rally is fairly started and there is no more reason why they should win it than you. But until you have returned the service, the odds are in your opponents' favour.

Double faults are not frequent in reasonably good tennis, so you, the receiver, are the first player to touch the ball with anything like a fifty-fifty chance of losing the point outright by putting it in the net. If the opposition have good first services which are

difficult to take, this moment of the receiver's return confronts your side with a definite hurdle to surmount. We have already mentioned that two of the world's leading doubles players this century have been Jacques Brugnon and John Bromwich, although they were not, perhaps, among the best net players. Yet they played with outstanding skill and intelligence, making numerous openings for their partner's benefit, and each excelled in return of service.

The usual return is across court to the server because he is under the disadvantage of being in motion and, probably, of not being quite up at the net like his partner. A high return is only asking for trouble against a good player. For that reason, the great majority of good service returns go low over the net and are intended to drop still lower soon after passing it, so that very commonly the server's next shot is a low volley from the vicinity of his knees. Probably the receiver should concentrate on the *trajectory* rather than the *direction* of his shot, because so long as he keeps the ball low enough it is reasonably safe. He must be careful, though, to keep it away from the man at the net. A low return straight at the incoming server is usually much more effective than a high one to his side.

When you are the receiver, remember that you are not expected to win the point straight away ; tennis would not be half such a good game if most rallies ended with the return of service. As long as

you place the ball back reasonably well, your side is now at least on level terms. The great crime is to return the ball into the net, for that must infallibly and invariably lose you the point without any hope of reprieve. Even the weakest return *over* the net is preferable to a hard one *into* it, for you cannot do worse than present your opponent with a "sitter", and there is no player so eminent that he does not occasionally miss one of these "sitters". Consequently, your best possible return goes very low over the net and your worst possible goes into it! It places you, the receiver, in an unfortunate predicament, but there it is; it is the most important shot in the game, and a matter of inches in the ball's trajectory makes all the difference between success and failure. So concentrate and practise as hard as you can, and try ever more earnestly to make your return of even humble ordinary services as reliable, accurate and effective as possible.

Some services are, of course, extremely good; there are even occasional outright winners or "aces", which leave the receiver standing. The server cannot be denied his opportunity or his initial advantage, and many service games are won by good serving without the receiver being blameworthy. Yet, in spite of this, the receiver must do his best and try hard to return the ball somehow. Probably a lob is the best shot when you are in difficulties, and at least it is infinitely preferable to the opposite extreme—putting the ball in the net.



Try to do a good lob—you will sometimes—but even if it is a poor one, it is encouraging to remember that thousands of easy smashes are missed every year.

Besides the low cross-court return and the lob, the third obvious return of service is the passing shot straight down the side-line past the man at the net. It is not an easy shot and it should not be attempted too often or your opponent will be too much on his guard, but it is a shot which will leave him helpless if it comes off, because he will be moving slightly in the wrong direction. Such a drive, travelling straight down the side-line, is a source of tremendous satisfaction to the maker, but you must remember that, practically speaking, you cannot make it off a serve down the middle line. Another point to bear in mind is that, when you do elect to play it off a suitable service, you must try not to reveal your intentions in any way.

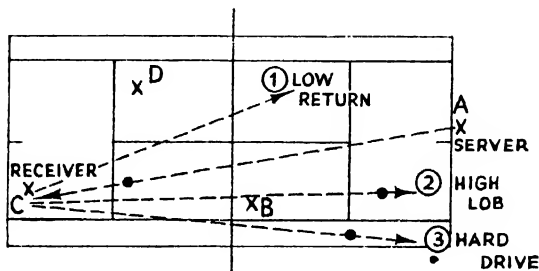
### Summary

Before we go any further, then, let us summarise the three main strokes which the receiver can employ for the return of service : —

- (1) A low cross-court shot to the feet of the incoming server --only a narrow margin of error as the ball crosses the net.
- (2) A high lob to the opposite base-line--very useful in defence against a strong or spinning service.

- (3) A passing drive straight down the side-line—  
a good shot if used sparingly and if not  
“advertised” too much.

The following diagram shows these three types  
of return :—



We have seen how important the receiver's return is and we have stressed that neither this shot nor the server's next stroke are, in general, occasions for trying to win the point outright. Many young players are too inipetuous and forget that the real object is to win the point at the right time, not to save time as such. By all means try to make—and seize—openings, but do not imagine them where there are none. In a rally, if the ball is low and awkward, your business is to get it back safely without losing the point. If it is rather easier, you want your return to make things so awkward for your opponent that his *next* shot may present you with an opportunity to finish the rally with a

winning shot. In fact, the general rule in life that things are more satisfying when you have had to work for them also holds good for openings made, and points won, at lawn tennis.

## CHAPTER XIII

### MATCH-PLAY

BEFORE giving any hints on the actual way to play matches—call it strategy, tactics, or whatever you like—it is wise to remind oneself that the best lessons are learnt on the court rather than from the pages of any book. As you play matches, try not only to play well and to win but also to realise which shots are good or bad, which tactics are successful or otherwise, and why. The simplest rally may illustrate an equally simple but none the less important maxim, and it is really surprising how many players who ought to know better do the silliest things. We are all of us bound to be beaten by good shots sometimes, or to hit the ball into the net or out of court, but mistakes of intelligence rather than of skill should usually be avoidable.

Lawn tennis fortunately requires a good deal of intelligence and determination when played seriously, and the harder and more level the game, the more those qualities are needed. To win a match by sheer "grit" and stamina is very rewarding, but to outwit an opponent by more intelligent tactics is also very satisfactory. A slight superiority of skill in the playing of strokes need not decide the result of a match, and a victory won despite

some slight initial disadvantage or handicap does more for your self-respect than a dozen ordinary wins can do. Walking downhill is very pleasant, but it is still more pleasant when you have climbed your hill first. So try to utilise the lessons you can learn from your own games, and if you happen to watch a match or a tournament, be an intelligent spectator and see if you can pick up any tips.

### Change of Tactics

One might quote many proverbs or sayings in connection with the tactics and psychology of match-play. "Never say die" and "Try everything once" come immediately to mind. "Never change a winning game" is another remark often made by tennis players. Certainly a player who is winning has no reason to wish things otherwise, so he is foolish if he makes any unnecessary alteration in his style of play. But if, for example, you lose the first set, you should think seriously whether there is not some change of pace or tactics worth trying. Very often there is no *change* required, but only an improvement. Perhaps you have lost games which you looked like winning by serving several double faults; you must not do that again. Or you may have worked hard for points by gradually getting your opponent on the run by means of angled drives, and then you have come to the net at the right moment only to miss some fairly easy volleys. In such circumstances there is no need to change

your game except for tremendous concentration on your services and volleys.

On the other hand, if you are playing about as well as usual and your opponent seems to thrive on your perfectly reasonable shots, it is no good continuing in just the same way and feeling that he ought not to be winning when all the time he is ! "Try everything once", so try the effect of some variation in your game. If keeping a "good" length has not been of any use, try a "bad" one ; many players continually hit the ball out if they have to play it in mid-court, especially on the run. Others, who can return hard drives with interest, do not like having to generate their own pace, and they are worried by a slower, softer game. Of course, if you are the player who has won the first set, and on whom some subtle variation of tactics is being tried, you must be prepared for it and "know all the answers". Whether winning or losing, remember that the match is not won until it is over and that "he laughs best who laughs last".

### Surprise Results

Where players are of approximately the same class, there is no knowing what may happen, and it is very foolish either to despair of winning or to feel cocksure about it. In both singles and doubles, at Wimbledon as in humbler circles, many matches are won and lost against the run of the earlier part of the play. If you follow the results of the fort-

night's championships at Wimbledon in any one year, you are sure to read of surprising recoveries made by apparently losing players ; and for one such report there are half a dozen other similar matches, the cause of which can be deduced from the plain figures of the score. The great American, W. T. Tilden, who was the world's leading player in the early twenties, was involved in at least two very surprising matches, one of which was won and one lost. Once in America, he appeared on the point of losing the singles title to W. M. Johnston when, by a tremendous effort, he returned an apparently winning angled volley with a shot down the side of the court, actually outside the net-post ; this was the turning-point of the match, which he then proceeded to win. Equally dramatic was his match one year at Wimbledon against H. Cochet, who won the Championship in 1927 and 1929. Tilden won the first two sets and led 5-1 in the third set, with his own service to come ; if ever any result seemed certain, that did. Yet Tilden lost the next sixteen points through some inexplicable weakening and it was Cochet who finally won the match. So it is never certain that you will win—or lose—until you do. Never give up trying because you are behind ; never relax your effort or concentration because you seem sure to win.

It is the same story in all grades of tennis. In an inter-County doubles match recently one pair led 6-2, 3-2 in a match which was the best of three

sets. The losing pair felt slightly despondent, for they had played some good lobs and done some hard driving to no purpose, but instead of continuing the same tactics, they then tried a change of policy—no more lobbing, and a slowing-up of their drives. The ball was returned low always but not fast ; and for some strange reason these tactics succeeded. The previously successful volleyers lost their touch—and also lost ten of the next eleven games. Of course, there is never any reason to *expect* dramatic changes or results, and very often when you seem to be losing a match you will indeed do so ; but there are occasional exceptions, not to say “ miracles ”, and there are worse mottoes than “ while there’s life, there’s hope ”

### Critical Points

It is obvious that, in order to facilitate the occurrence of “ miracles ” in your favour, you should not only try hard all the time but also be aware of certain moments in the game or stages in the score which are particularly important. It sounds easy to say “ try hard all the time ”, but it is not so easy in fact. The keen games player, boy or girl, may imagine that one always does so in all games, but singles at tennis demand more unflagging attention and concentration than most forms of sport. In games like football and hockey the ball is often quite a long way from some of the players and a slight lessening of concentration is inevitable and, in fact,



desirable. In cricket, too, you can relax between each over, you cannot bowl more than one over at a time, and you do not in batting normally receive more than three out of five balls bowled while you are at the wicket. But in tennis, if you are not actually engaged in a rally, you are inevitably just on the point of serving or of receiving service, and it *always* matters what you do. So if certain moments in a match are particularly important, it is desirable to know them in order to sharpen your concentration and effort to the very maximum at those times. Your opponent probably will know them, and you do not wish to be at a disadvantage at a crucial moment.

It is generally agreed that the third point of each game and, for somewhat similar reasons, the seventh game of each set are very important. Obviously, if the score is 15-all, the next point provides a chance for one or other player to get his nose in front. At this stage, perhaps half-way through the game, a lead is important, much more so than at love-all when you start. Clearly, too, if the score is 30-love or love-30, the third point is of even greater importance; and although leads of 40-love are thrown away surprisingly often, it is inevitable that in the nature of things the player so leading should usually win the game. Nobody likes being love-40 down! But 30-15 or 15-30 are a different matter. So whatever may happen in the first two points of a game, do concentrate very hard on the third.

### Critical Games

It is the same with the seventh game of a set. Ignoring love sets, about which little can be done in any case, it will be evident that after six games have been played the score is likely to be 3-all or 4-2 to one side or the other. These are scores rather like 15-all and 30-love. At 3-all the seventh game gives you the chance to get your head in front when you are, so to speak, coming into the straight. At 4-2 or 2-4 you can either put yourself in a theoretically winning position or have a last chance to stop your opponent from getting there. Not only is 5-2, both on the face of it and psychologically, a winning position, but it is also a genuine lead, which, in good tennis, 4-3 is not.

The reason for this is the service factor. Among beginners it is no advantage whatever to serve ; double faults are frequent and correct services are often too feeble to be an asset. In ordinary club tennis there is not much advantage in serving either, although certain players have a service—or more correctly, perhaps, a *first* service which is of a standard considerably higher than the rest of their play. As the grade of tennis improves, service becomes a more powerful weapon and more and more of an advantage ; good players *expect* to win their services, especially in men's doubles, and sets are won or lost because one player *once* fails to do so.

Consequently, a lead of 4-3 when you have just served means comparatively little, certainly very

much less than a real lead of 5-2. At 4-3, the reasonable expectation is that your opponents will level the score at 4-all, by "holding" their service. Of course, it is pleasant to be the odd game up, and for that reason good players always choose service on winning the toss, a psychological reason. Although in reality it is just as important to win the odd games on your service as it is for the opposition to win the even games on theirs, it *seems* less crucial when you serve at 1-all, 2-all, 3-all, and so on, than if you are always a game behind when you serve.

The seventh game of a set is important because the end is now in sight. At this stage any advantage, real or apparent, is worth more than in the first few games. So whatever the score after six games, try very hard for the next one, not least if you lead 4-2. Advantages which are not pressed home soon melt away, and the gods do not look favourably on those who waste their gifts!

### Critical Sets

Taking a 3-set match as a whole, there can be little doubt that the most important period of all is the first three games of the second set. When players are evenly matched, there is no real reason why the winner of the first set should win the whole match, and if some mathematician worked out a law of probability based on matches which actually lasted three sets—suggesting fairly level opponents

—it might well be found to point to the winners of the *second* set being the ultimate victors more often than not. Lacoste used to say that the second set mattered much more than the first, though he would probably have been thinking more of 5-set matches. In ordinary tournaments and matches, whether of school or college, club or county, the first three games of the second set are critical ones. 2-1 and 1-2 do not mean much, except a lead of 2-1 with your service to come, but there is a big difference between 3-0 and 0-3. Psychology, as so often, plays a big part. The winner of the first set has only to get to 3-0 in the second for both players to feel somewhere inside them that he is going to win the match. Conversely, if you reach 3-0 after losing the first set, the chances are that you will “rattle” your opponent and you ought in many cases to be able to hang on to your lead and win the set. If so, not only have you saved your skin for the present but also you start the final set on perfectly level terms and without that horrid feeling of inferiority.

Yet players often make the fatal mistake of easing off after winning the first set. At this moment you, leading by one set to love, have the advantage, and you *must* keep it and press it home. It is very likely easier to win the second set—and the match—while you possess this advantage than to win the third after throwing it away and putting fresh heart into your adversary. Always grit your teeth, then, at

the beginning of the second set in any match, whether you won or lost the first, telling yourself that, come what may, you will obtain that 3-0 lead. Should you fail, let your failure be a narrow one, and at all costs prevent your opponent from reaching 3-0. Once he does that, he will feel confident of ultimate victory and be twice as hard to beat as if you had never allowed him to gain that confidence. Even love sets can flatter only to deceive and lull the winner into a false sense of security. So once you have a man down, keep him down ; do not relax your pressure because you have won a set, however easily you did so.

### Variation of Tactics

If you have any preconceived plan for a certain match, it is necessary that you should be elastic in your attitude towards it. As you actually play, you will be able to see the way your plan is working out and you should be quite ready to change it if required. Against unknown opponents, one just goes on the court with an open mind, but if you have met them before or watched them previously, it is natural that you should form some idea of the policy to adopt. There are many peculiarities which players may have which you only discover very gradually while you play against them. By the time you realise something which would have saved you a large number of points if you had known it at the start, you may be well on the way to losing

the match. In a tournament, or in any match where it is possible to watch future opponents before you meet them, do not hesitate to do so. Look out for their best shots and also for any possible weaknesses or peculiarities. Does your next opponent regularly serve to the backhand in both courts? Does he make a habit of following a first service—or either service—to the net, especially at game point? Are his passing shots good? Are his volleys nine times out of ten stop-volleys, or does he “smash” everything overhead?

Those are only some of the possible questions to which you may observe the answers, and there can be no harm in looking for them. All the same, remember that even a plan based on observation should be elastic; it is what happens in *your* match that matters, not what you thought you noticed in a previous one. Volleyers need not always storm the net nor base-liners remain on the defensive. Borotra was the volleyer, *par excellence*, in the whole history of lawn tennis, while his compatriot, Lacoste, was rather the opposite type of player. Yet Lacoste found that it sometimes paid him to play a volleying game when he was playing Borotra, for the real essential was to keep the latter at all costs as far away from the net as possible.

### Consideration of your Opponents

As with writing and everything else, a minority of players are left-handed, while a much smaller

number are ambidextrous or play two-handed shots like Bromwich and a few other Australians. Anything like this would be a nasty shock at the beginning of a match against a stranger, which is an added reason for watching future opponents when you can. Ordinarily, there is a tendency to assume that a player's backhand is his weaker side ; but obviously if he has no such thing as a backhand, you will have to give the question rather more thought ! Again, the number of left-handed players is probably little greater than the number of players whose backhand is superior to their forehand. There is a good chance of your meeting such opponents occasionally, though such encounters are rare enough to be easily forgotten. If you have been narrowly beaten by a man whose backhand you have attacked very much in the usual manner, you feel extremely foolish if you later discover that his weakness is on his forehand and that he was all the time thanking his stars that you never seemed to notice it !

Because of the great majority of players who have weakish backhands and play right-handed, it is easy to concentrate too much on playing to that side of the court. Certainly you want a good forehand drive straight down the side-line, and certainly cross-court backhands are useful. There is no denying the utility of good shots to most opponents' left, but one must not develop them to the exclusion of all else. The general danger of stereotyped shots is the

same for all players, but the particular possibility of being at a loss when playing a left-handed opponent is something more likely to affect boys than girls.

### Mixed Doubles Tactics

It is the custom in mixed doubles for the man to play in the left court and the woman in the right, in the vast majority of cases. This arrangement is partly because it is thought that a good backhand is more essential in the left court, and partly perhaps because the domineering male likes to take the responsibility of tackling the job of returning service at the critical game-scores of 40-30, 30-40, and "advantage" either way. A great many girls who become reasonably good players and play mixed doubles at their clubs—and perhaps *for* them—develop a strong forhand cross-court drive, because that is so often the stroke needed for their return of service. Yet whatever your inclinations, and even whatever your good shots, do not let them become too rigid.

### Useful Training Practices

There is one way for men to practise a cross-court forehand and straight backhand which may be easy in the case of married couples, brothers and sisters, or just plain boys and girls who like playing tennis together. When two people play singles and one is definitely the stronger, it may give him excellent practice—and make the game more even—

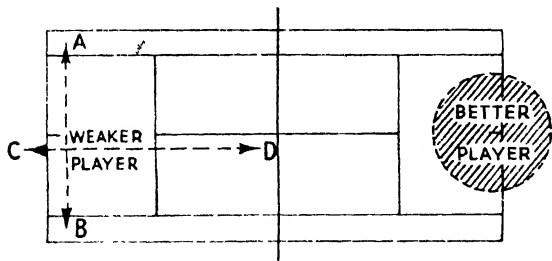


if he concentrates as far as possible on his opponent's forehand. This makes it easier for the weaker player to make a game of it and also helps the better one to vary his game and develop the strokes he would need against a left-hander.

Similarly, it may be well worth while, if you play frequent singles against a friend of your own class, to use some of those occasions for practising particular shots, tactics, or general technique. This gives variety and may enable you to enjoy rather more the days when you and this friend play two or three quite straightforward sets. One thing to practise is following your service to the net; we have seen that it is done much less in singles than in doubles, but all good players should be able to do it when they want. Even if you only do it once or twice in a set, your sudden pursuit of your service to the net at set point, for example, may well startle your opponent into a weaker return than he would have made if you had stayed back. Besides, the knowledge that one's adversary *never* follows up his serve helps one to play unhurried accurate returns. Now you do not want to "practise" this in a serious match, but you easily could with that obliging friend. Do not wear yourself out by trying to follow up *every* serve, of course, but one day you might follow up a good proportion in the right court and another day those in the left court. It is the resulting volley which you are practising and all the circumstances are slightly different if the service is

returned from the right court compared with the left. So in any particular set, it is a good tip to concentrate on one or the other.

Another variation is to alternate deep drives with much shorter balls, as distinct from swinging the ball from side to side of the court. It is important to be able to do this, and also to be able to counter it ; it demands speed of foot, and a refusal to get rattled. Players of the "retrieving" type, especially girls, are often much better at running to and fro across the court, returning everything, than they are at getting up to a drop shot and then dealing with the subsequent lob. This useful practice—for both players—is shown in the following diagram, where the better player alternates his strokes along the lines AB and CD :—



If you serve overhead and are also quick to run up court, your opponent's strokes will be considerably reduced ; but girls are at a disadvantage in this respect, because of their smaller reach and

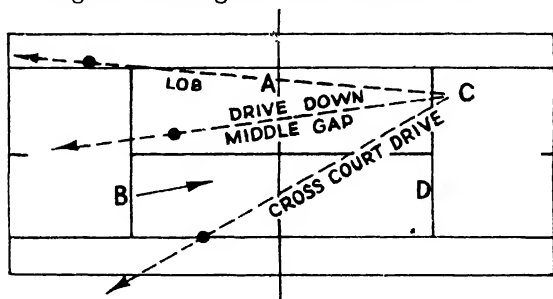
generally shorter legs, so intelligent tactics count for a lot in their case. In a 1951 Tournament, one of the leading English girl players performed prodigious feats in running from side to side to return the drives of her American opponent, but as she became tired she was conspicuously less successful in dealing with a judicious mixture of shorter and deeper balls, which forced her to run up and down the court instead of across it.

### The Use of the Lob in Doubles Play

Now let us consider a few points connected with doubles play. We have already seen how it differs from singles ; that the net is a more commanding position with two players to cover it ; that both sides should make every effort to get there ; and that, because the server can reach the net before the receiver, it should be a great advantage to serve and in good men's doubles games generally go with the service. At any moment when you have to play the ball with both your opponents at, or approaching, the net, you have in principle three choices open to you :--

- (1) You can aim for one of the side-lines, either the one immediately in front of you or the one on the far side of the court.
- (2) You can aim for the gap down the middle between your opponents.
- (3) You can throw up a lob over their heads.

The drive straight past an opponent at the net is a risky shot unless he is standing too near the middle of the net, so, omitting that particular stroke, here is a diagram showing the above three choices :—



Of course, possible positions and angles are continually changing, and in the course of a few rallies you may find yourself playing every kind of shot ; but there are still one or two useful considerations. Since a good lob is an admirable shot but an inferior lob quite fatal, you want to do what you can to reduce the risks. Now it takes a good player to play an effective backhand smash, whereas a low lob to the forehand is always asking for trouble ; on the whole, therefore, you want to lob over someone's backhand. Assuming that your opponents are right-handed, it is difficult to do this from the left-hand court, because a lob to the backhand of the player opposite you will be covered—and probably smashed—by his partner. So it is easier to lob from the *right* court and it is worth remembering that,

although of course hundreds of lobs are bound to be played from the left court. From the right court you can lob effectively down the side-line above and outside your opponent's left shoulder. At worst, he may be able to play a backhand smash, and at best either he or his partner will have to chase the lob and return it on the backhand after it bounces. If the player at the net should be a girl or a rather short man, the shot is still easier to play with very little risk.

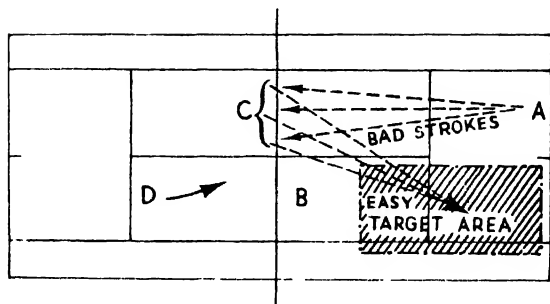
#### Driving Tactics, in Doubles Play

If you are going to drive the ball at your opponents, you will sometimes try a passing shot straight down the side-line, especially if there seems to be a gap left uncovered. Yet it is a mistake to overdo this. Not only has the volleyer a wide choice of angles open to him, assuming he can reach the ball, but also you are deliberately trying to hit the ball over the net at its *highest* point and running the further risk of hitting the ball out if you make the smallest lateral error. On the other hand, driving down the middle *between* your opponents is just as likely to be effective in itself as a passing shot and has the advantage of being free from all the risks of the latter. It does not present them with so much choice of angle, it means aiming at the *lowest* point of the net, and there is no chance of a small error in angle sending the ball out. Another advantage is that your opponents may also get muddled and

either both go for the ball or both leave it. Consequently many good doubles players aim more for the middle of the court than the sides.

### Tactical Manœuvres In Doubles Play

It is usually said that both partners should be level with each other, that it is best for them both to be at the net or both at the back of the court, and to advance or retreat together. Broadly speaking, this is correct, but like all other plans, it must be reasonably elastic. The server cannot start level with his partner but he hopes to join him at the net. The receiver must be on or near the base-line, and while some people think his partner should be there level with him, others prefer the partner to be up towards the net waiting for the receiver to join him much as the server's partner waits for him. Anyhow, that is the general principle, and there is one important point connected with it, an essential "Don't" for all occasions when you find yourself and your partner unfortunately not level at all, but him up at the net and you at the back of the court. If the ball comes to you under those circumstances, it is essential that you make a rule of returning the ball across court. There are exceptions to every rule, of course, and you might try a lob or a passing shot down the side-line, provided that you really understand the risk you are taking and have calculated it, with some good reason to believe that the shot will come off. Look at this diagram :—



As you can see from the above diagram—and can find for yourself very easily in actual play—the point is that if you return the ball straight to the opponent opposite you, he has a yawning gap behind your partner and out of your own reach into which to place the ball. So sometimes lob and very occasionally go for the outright winner, but *never* play a vague, unthinking, haphazard sort of return straight down the court. Always try to play shots which are at least sensible in theory, though of course we all make mistakes in execution.

### “ Poaching ”

Lastly, there is something we have all heard of and experienced—the problem of “ poaching ”. It is again difficult to give any hard and fast rules, though we all know the four possible emotions experienced by two partners when a glaring example of poaching either succeeds or fails. The player

responsible feels rather pleased with himself or else very guilty, while his partner is fairly contented or very indignant ! So there is not only the question of winning or losing points to consider, but also a certain amount of psychology. It is obviously desirable to keep your partner happy, and though sometimes you may feel afterwards that you could have won a particular point if you *had* poached, he cannot feel disgusted with you for not poaching. If, on the other hand, you lose a point because you poached unsuccessfully, he certainly has every right to feel wrathful. Unless your partner, male or female, is of the rare kind that is incapable of resentment—whether from love, hero-worship, or any other cause !—it is probably better policy to forgo a few possible winners than to risk spoiling a partnership.

There is, of course, the psychology of your opponents also to be considered. Although they will be delighted when your poaching is unsuccessful and you rush across the net only to hit the ball into it, it is arguable that you should nevertheless make such rushes *occasionally* in order to keep them guessing and to prevent them from making their shots with complete calm and deliberation. The most obvious case is when your partner is serving ; if you never move across, the receivers will play their shots with more and more confidence, and therefore better and better. But if you sometimes do try to intercept—or even make a feint in that



action—you will keep them wondering on each occasion whether or not it is safe to play their usual turn. Then sometimes, being afraid of your excursions, they will choose the wrong moment for passing shot, and you, who were not doing anything across that time, will cut it off easily.

At certain critical moments—set-point or match-point in your favour, for instance—the receiver will worry about your intentions if you have shown yourself the kind of player who sometimes does and sometimes does not try for the interception. His anxiety will make it all the harder for him to make good shot. Incidentally, one might argue that even a player who throughout a match has never tried to intercept the return of service could well have a go at it at match-point. The receiver by that time must feel that there is no danger on that score and will very likely return the ball within your reach if you really try to get it. Conversely, one might do well to poach on the very *first* point of a match; this is sometimes done in tournaments and can be most effective. A bold and successful interception of the very first return of service, especially if it seemed to the unfortunate receiver to be quite a reasonable shot of his, may put him off his stroke for some time.

In all this we have really been thinking of men's or ladies' doubles, and any suggestion that you should indulge in occasional poaching has only been meant to modify the basic principles that you should

not take a ball which your partner could take just as well and that it is better to poach too little than too much. Mixed doubles, however, are slightly different, assuming that two partners are about equally good performers *for their sex*. In such cases, the man is generally the better player, actually though not relatively, and it is usually agreed that he should take about three-fifths of the play. This is chiefly done by his taking the shots down the middle, whether high or low, which *could* be taken by either partner.

Yet in fact men do usually poach quite a lot in mixed doubles. You should not overdo it, and how much is right depends on the actual players. The better the girl and the quicker she is on her feet, the less the man should do. In some pairs she is just as good as he is, but if she is weaker and likely to crack under pressure, the man may feel it is worth trying to interrupt a rally even if he has only a fifty-fifty chance of success. In the Final at Wimbledon in 1951, M. G. Rose and Mrs. Bolton of Australia had little chance, on paper, against F. A. Sedgman and Miss Doris Hart; but they made an excellent fight, at least in the first set, and Rose was poaching a good deal. So in all mixed doubles the man must bear in mind, before poaching, the possible reactions upon his partner and his opponents, as well as the score and the tactical situation. All these factors obviously make it a very difficult problem for him to solve.